



# Bringing Hope to Life

A publication of  
Health Sciences Centre Foundation

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## “Another Day at the Office”

### HSC patient reflects on lung cancer experience

Winnipeg teacher Shawn Reimer shared his experience as an HSC patient at the HSC Foundation’s annual Hope to Life donor appreciation luncheon on May 9. What follows is an edited version of his remarks:

“...It was hard to say no to Dr. Larry Tan when he asked me to speak today. He is kind, persuasive, and he played a significant role in saving my life.

Four days ago, I ran the Winnipeg Police Half Marathon and finished with a time of one hour and 36 minutes. A pretty average time for a guy my age—but a **very good** time for someone who had surgery for lung cancer seven months ago.

Seventeen years ago as a teenager, I felt a lump on my neck. I had surgery and a diagnosis of Hodgkin’s lymphoma, followed by chemotherapy and radiation.

After a year, I was declared cancer-free. Life went on. I pursued my teaching career and started a family.

All was good until I had some shoulder pain last summer. My doctor felt that because of my health history I should get a chest x-ray. She saw a spot on my lung that concerned her enough to order a CT scan.

My shoulder was unrelated to the spot on my lung, but it was the shoulder pain that took me to the doctor. Another doctor I know said I won the lottery. Without the shoulder pain, I would have had no reason to seek help.

After the CT scan, I was referred to Dr. Tan—which was like winning a second lottery. He immediately

exuded expertise and confidence. No false hope; no jargon. He spoke kindly and directly. He ordered a PET scan and other tests.

In September, he reviewed the PET scan results and decided that surgery should be scheduled without the other tests. The PET scan told him what he needed to know. Dr. Tan’s expertise and decisiveness represented the best of the health care system. The one-month wait for surgery represented something else. And I am told that there are others who wait much longer for surgery than I did.

Dr. Tan encouraged me to start the school year, so I did. When I wasn’t working, I was distracted and afraid. Would the surgery prove that I have cancer? What would recovery be like? Would I be around for my wife and two young daughters?

Surgery day came. Dr. Tan performed a left lower lobectomy, meaning that he removed approximately half of my left lung. The surgery was complicated because of the scar tissue remaining from the radiation I had endured 17 years ago.

Going in, I was hoping that Dr. Tan would be focused. That he was having a good day. That he was ready. He later told me that mine was his fifth thoracic surgery that week. For a surgeon like Larry Tan, saving lives is just another day at the office. How lucky we are in Manitoba to have him.



Shawn Reimer addresses donors at the Hope to Life luncheon.

During a follow-up PET scan in March, no cancer was visible, but Dr. Tan saw some growth in some soft tissue. He’s watching it, and I will see him again in October. Yes, I have some fear, but I know that I am in excellent hands.

I don’t know what the future holds. None of us do. But I do know that you and I need to live every day to the fullest, to love those around us, and do the things that make us happy.

I am thankful to HSC, to Dr. Tan, and to his wonderful staff. And I am thankful to donors like you who contributed to the hospital’s thoracics campaign. Your gifts will shorten wait times and help Dr. Tan and his colleagues to perform at even higher levels of excellence—even though I can’t imagine how that would be possible.

Through this experience, I have learned about the important role philanthropy plays in making sure that high-quality care is available to all Manitobans at HSC.”



Shawn Reimer and family: “After the CT scan, I was referred to Dr. Tan—which was like winning a second lottery.”



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The Bannatyne Legacy Circle is an opportunity to make your mark forever. To join a community that cares. To continue making a difference for all time. To inspire others. To keep HSC on the leading edge for the benefit of future generations—for your children, grandchildren, and beyond.

To learn more about the difference you can make, please contact Irma McKenzie, our Director of Planned and Legacy Giving, at [imckenzie@hscfoundation.mb.ca](mailto:imckenzie@hscfoundation.mb.ca) or 204-515-5624.



# The Loved Ones

## Not everyone who recovers at HSC is a patient

Joanne McMillan wasn't a patient, but she spent many days at Health Sciences Centre between April 10, 2016, and July 27, 2017. Her husband, Dwight, stayed nearly 15 months in a variety of units in the wards and units in the hospital. While Dwight battled two bowel obstructions and pancreatitis, Joanne battled something else: the immense grief and uncertainty that came with Dwight's hospitalization.

Dwight's condition was very up-and-down. Just when something seemed to be getting better, something else got worse. With every new surgery or complication, Joanne hopped into her 2003 Ford Windstar and made the three-hour trek from their home in Onanole, Manitoba, to HSC. Their three children—two adult sons and a daughter—often came, too.

"I had to get doctor's notes just to leave. But I never missed a weekend with Dwight. Not one," she said.

During the week, Joanne kept working. "I had to have a sense of normalcy. I could have taken stress leave from work, but then I'd have more time to think and stress. Sometimes, I would wake up at four in the morning and couldn't fall back to sleep," she said.

But Joanne found comfort and recovery at HSC. The care providers who looked after Dwight looked after her, too. During one visit, Dr. Faisal Siddiqui, an emergency room physician, sat Joanne down and asked her: "How are you doing?"



Joanne and Dwight McMillan

"I nearly broke down," said Joanne. "The doctors here just care. They help you get through this, too. It's not just the patient who is going through this: it's the whole family. It's my family."

The doctors at HSC would always call, email, and meet with Joanne to keep her up-to-date on Dwight's progress. It was a relief, and a sign of compassion and respect.

Finally, by July 27, 2017, Dwight's health had improved enough for him to be discharged and sent home.

"We were excited to take him home. He hadn't been outside, hadn't seen the scenery," said Joanne. That July was the first time Dwight experienced the warmth of the summer sun in 15 months.

"It's one thing to have great care, and we had that. But there's also the mental, psychological side of care. That's where HSC helped us both recover. None of this is easy," said Dwight.

Today, Dwight and Joanne are active with the HSC Foundation and have donated their time, money, and even a pizza party for some of the staff at HSC.

"There's nothing you could say or do to really repay everyone at HSC. If I hadn't come to Winnipeg, I would "have been dead." There's no other way to say it. If I hadn't come to HSC, I don't know how my family would have survived."



Dwight and Joanne McMillan with HSC Physiotherapist Amber Solomon

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Sounds Good!

#### Radiothon Raises Over \$184,000

Thanks to donors like you, the Hope to Life Radiothon, presented by Maric Homes, raised a record \$184,120.56 on January 25. These funds will help patients access better care, make innovative research possible, construct advanced facilities, and upgrade critical medical equipment.



Generous donors "burst" our fundraising thermometer, setting a new Hope to Life Radiothon record.

The grand total included \$30,000 in matching gifts from The Wawanesa Mutual Insurance Company, Johnston Group, and Access Credit Union, and \$8,000 in matching gifts from the Challoner family.

The Radiothon was broadcast live on 680 CJOB and Power 97. Guests included grateful patients who shared moving stories, and doctors, researchers, and frontline staff who offered insights into their work at HSC.

### Donors Support New Transplant Clinic

#### New clinic will improve patient care, consolidate services for transplant patients

On May 16, the HSC Foundation proudly announced that thanks to two anonymous gifts to the Health Sciences Centre Foundation totalling \$3 million, Health Sciences Centre Winnipeg will now be able to develop a new Ambulatory Care Clinic for transplant patients. The clinic will be housed on the third floor of the Kleysen Institute for Advanced Medicine on the HSC campus.



Premier Brian Pallister and Health Minister Cameron Friesen join grateful patients excited for new HSC Clinic to open in fall of 2020.

The total cost of the project is approximately \$5.5 million. The balance of the required funding is coming from the Province of Manitoba. Over the past five years, HSC Winnipeg has performed an average of over 50 kidney transplants per year. With the new clinical space, the hospital will be able to increase that number to 70. This space will be used to meet the needs of kidney transplant patients—before and after their surgeries in Winnipeg—as well as lung and liver transplant patients waiting for their surgeries in other provinces.



**Congratulations to HSC Winnipeg's Dr. Michael West on his appointment to the 2019 Order of Manitoba! Dr. West and 11 other recipients will be invested in the Order at a ceremony on July 18. Dr. West is an internationally renowned physician and researcher who succeeded in establishing a centre of neurosurgery excellence at HSC.**

# Your donations make a real difference.

Every day, your gifts help patients receive the care they need at Manitoba's flagship hospital: HSC Winnipeg. And it's not just the HSC Foundation that's thankful for donors like you:



“ We have a healthy baby girl now. Everything worked out the way it was supposed to work out. I can't thank HSC enough. ”

- Seema Seburn, complicated pregnancy, former obstetrical patient

“ I am so fortunate that this technology exists, and through the HSC Foundation they were able to build such a facility here in Winnipeg. I am lucky to be living proof of how it helps patients like me and to share with you that lives can be and are changed thanks to the support of donors. ”

- Stephen Kussy, spinal column tumour, former neurosurgery patient in the Centre for Surgical Innovation



“ There's no amount of thanks for what they've done for me and my family. Support your hospital. That's all I can say. Anything that's changed since my surgery, it's all because there's been support for the hospital. ”

- Christine Jawa, spinal column tumour, former neurosurgery patient



“ It was nerve-racking—knowing you're about to have a serious surgery. But when my surgeon came by, he saw that I was nervous. He spent time going over everything with me and asked if I had any questions. All my fears and anxiety went away. ”

- Michael Strick, brain tumour causing epileptic seizures, former neurosurgery patient in the Centre for Surgical Innovation



“ I've always said to people, if anyone's going to save your life, these four walls are going to do it. I've seen some incredible stuff over my career, and I just believe in HSC. They saved my dad. ”

- Debbie Stutsky, Neurosurgery Clinic Nurse at HSC, father treated for stroke at HSC

“ The nurses were a large part of my recovery. I trusted them so much. But my eating disorder didn't. Everyone was telling me that life would be better without the eating disorder. I just trusted them. I took what they told me and applied it. ”

- Mikala Ahrens, former in-patient at the HSC Adult Eating Disorders Program



“ There wasn't a single day at HSC when I worried about my recovery. I knew I was in good hands. The doctors and nurses made me feel like a person, not a patient. They were some of the most genuine people I've ever met. ”

- Eric Guy, broken neck, former trauma patient



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## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

The Health Sciences Centre Foundation raised over \$548,000 to support patient care at HSC, thanks to attendees at the 9th annual Savour: Wine & Food Experience held Saturday, February 23.

Thank you to all of our generous donors, sponsors, and guests who not only enjoyed an evening inspired by the flavours and wines of South Africa, but who also made a significant contribution to the quality of health care in Manitoba.

We can't wait to see you all on February 22 at Savour 2020!

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