

Believe

You are creating a healthier society

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When Your Baby “Texts You”

Secure app connects parents to their NICU babies



Amaya Young-Thiessen (in photo at right), born at 30 weeks, spent her first Christmas in the NICU. A new, secure video messaging app allowed her mother, Jessica, to stay connected over the holidays.

Christmas had come, and Jessica Young could not be with her newborn child.

Young was recovering from an emergency C-section and several painful complications, including a separated pelvis, at her Winnipeg home in late December. She could not be at St. Boniface Hospital as often as she would have liked to hold her baby, Amaya, in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). The tiny infant had difficulty breathing when she was born the month before, at 30 weeks.

“I couldn’t even hold her until she was a week old. She was on two different ventilators,” said Young, who was herself admitted in Hospital for the first two weeks of Amaya’s life.

Luckily, Young and Amaya’s father, Colin Thiessen, were among the first new parents in Western Canada to start using vCreate, a secure video messaging app, to stay connected with their baby. The cutting-edge technology was introduced just days before Christmas for all parents in the Hospital’s NICU to use and was made possible by generous donor support.

“I was healing from a serious infection and separated pelvis; it was very hard for me to leave the house,” explained Young. “If I couldn’t, the nurses sent me photos of my baby on vCreate. The first time she fed from a bottle, they sent me a video... I will keep it forever.”

Amaya spent more than 50 days in the Hospital before coming home in January. Her mother received email notifications

about new posts from nurses. She logged into vCreate easily using a username and password. Young was also able to reply with comments for the nurses.

“It was good to have the photos when I couldn’t be there full time with my baby – to feel that extra connection to her. It brightened my day,” said Young.

“The photos were super adorable. The nurses took Christmas photos of Amaya with a cute little rattle shaped like a lollipop, and others with a little plastic cookie placed in her hand. It was very cute, and they dressed her in a little red and white outfit I had for her to make it special.”

A recent multi-centre evaluation highlighted how the video service reduces parents’ separation anxiety, improves their involvement in their child’s care, and supports positive relationships with their clinical care team.

The new app has safeguards and digital security features in place to protect patient and family privacy, as required by law (PHIA). St. Boniface nurses weren’t allowed to share photos before, over non-secure digital channels like texting.

“They treated her so well,” said Young. “I am so grateful for the care she received in the NICU. The staff were all amazing.”

NICU families are benefiting from this cutting-edge technology, thanks to your support.



Welcome to a new, but old (more on that in a moment), chapter in the history of the Foundation's *Believe* newsletter!

With this issue we are introducing a new format for you to enjoy. Shorter than before, but starting this year, you will get to read about the impact of your gifts more often – four times per year in print, including our Foundation's annual report in the spring. We're looking forward to having more of these exciting opportunities to connect with you in 2022.

Over the past several years, we have also introduced additional ways to share stories from former St. Boniface Hospital patients, their families, researchers, and health-care workers on the front lines. These include our monthly e-newsletter, Health Report 2.0 webcasts, and the Foundation's social media accounts (@STBHF). Connect with us online! Call 204-237-2067 or email info@stbhf.org and we'll set you up, if you need help.

If you've been with us long enough, this style of newsletter might even look familiar! *Believe* transitioned to our previous magazine format in 2012. Prior to that, in the '90s and 2000s, it had been a newsletter format of lengths between 2 and 8 pages. So, what's old is new again.

Your past support has made a real difference by providing critical patient care for Manitobans and advancing medical research at the Hospital. Thank you.

Karen Fowler
President & CEO
St. Boniface Hospital Foundation

PS: We are sharing stories of gratitude with front line health-care workers at St. Boniface, who need some extra love right now. Do you have one? Let us know by emailing info@stbhf.org.

In Brief: Foundation News



Credit: La Liberté

Interim President & CEO named

Congratulations from the Foundation to Nicole Aminot, who was named Interim President & CEO of St. Boniface Hospital in October. Aminot joined the Hospital more than 13 years ago as Manager of Accounting and worked her way up to Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director of Support Services, the position she held until assuming her current leadership role.

The future of emergency care for Manitobans

St. Boniface Hospital is getting a new and improved Emergency Department. Plans for the redevelopment and expansion project are in place, and demolition work will soon begin on Taché Avenue to make room for new construction. We look forward to sharing more information on this exciting project as it continues to move forward and will let you know how and when you can get involved.



Credit: Ian McCausland Photography

Unconscious bias exhibit debuts at St. Boniface

The Foundation was proud to work with the Buhler Gallery and others last fall, to co-sponsor a new public art installation called *Bias Outside the Box* as part of Nuit Blanche Winnipeg 2021. The exhibit by consulting and clinical psychologist Dr. Rehman Abdulrehman and photographer Ian McCausland is visible at the southeast exterior of the Hospital's Everett Atrium. You can learn more about *Bias Outside the Box* at leadwithdiversity.com/testbias.



2021 Radiothon

of Hope and Healing
St. Boniface Hospital Foundation

Record-Breaking Year for Radiothon

Large gifts pushed the total higher than ever

The 2021 Radiothon of Hope and Healing, presented by the Vickar Automotive Group on November 19, raised \$280,000 in support of patient care and research at the Hospital.

As the phone lines kept ringing and online donations poured in, the Kinsmen Club of Winnipeg stepped forward with a \$25,000 donation. It was a gift from Winnipeg Kinsmen members' hearts, explained Tim McKay, Vice-President of Service.

"Certainly, we've had several members who have been impacted by Manitoba's Cardiac Centre of Excellence," explained McKay, adding that the club's president was among members who have either had cardiac issues treated at St. Boniface, or have family members who did. "We wanted to make sure we reached out and helped the great work being done at the Hospital!"

The gift came out of revenues from the Kinsmen Jackpot Bingo program. "That's our biggest fundraiser that we use to support causes in Manitoba. With it, we try and make even more of a positive impact and serve our community's greatest need," said McKay.

Winnipeg resident Brett Arnason had been planning to make a gift to St. Boniface, after having three successful open-heart surgeries at the Hospital – two of them during the pandemic, which he believes is a record he alone holds. After hearing on 680 CJOB that Radiothon donations were being matched, Arnason went online and gave \$10,000 on the spot.

Arnason first started experiencing cardiac issues in 2011, when he was a competitive speed-skater in the Masters age



category. After a scare in which he passed out following a race, his aortic valve had to be replaced due to a previously undetected birth defect. Years later, complications including an infection required the valve to be replaced twice more, as recently as January 2021. He was told his chance of surviving the final operation was only 10 to 15 per cent, but he made it.

Meanwhile, Dwight Gelhorn, of Winnipeg, called in on Radiothon day with his own \$10,000 gift.

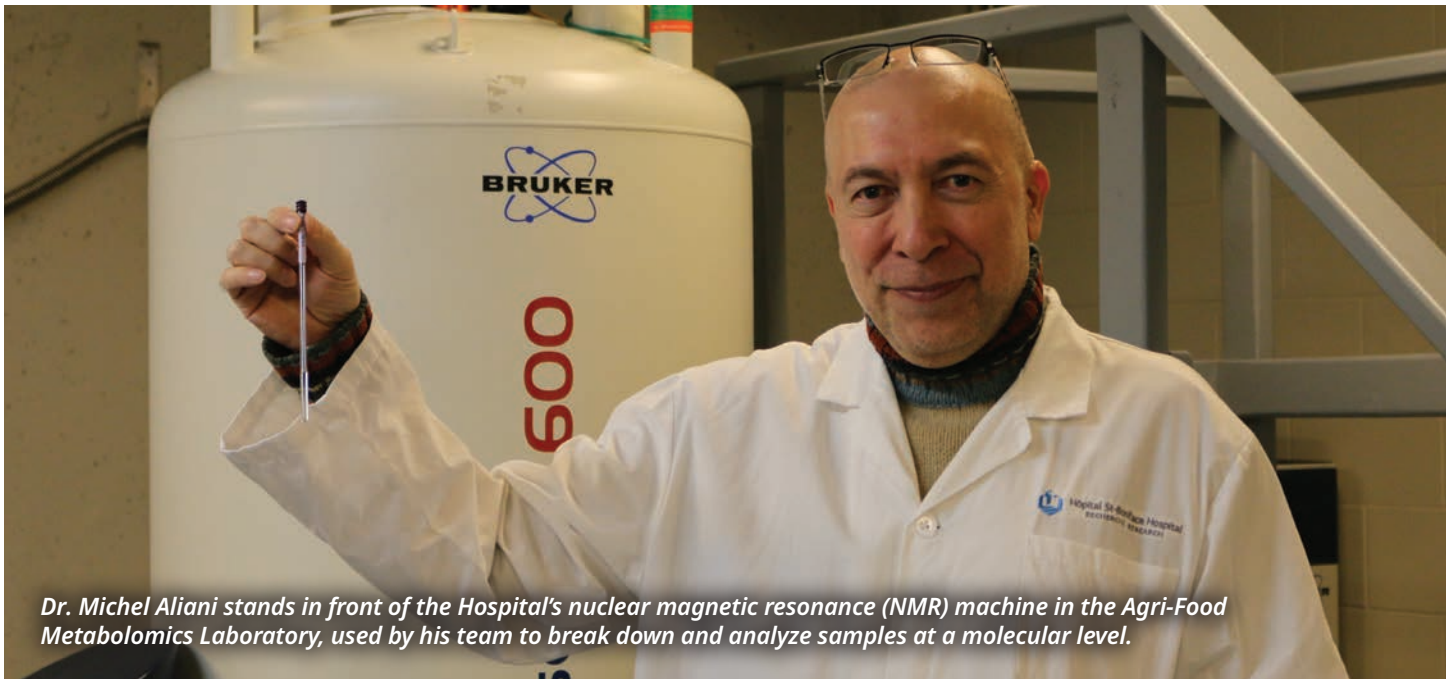
"I strongly believe that it's up to every Manitoban to do what they can to help support the health-care system in our province. Not everyone can make a donation, but they can do other things...like going to get vaccinated, for instance" said Gelhorn.

"It should be just natural that we do what we can," he continued. "I haven't used the facility and I'd like to keep it that way. But I realize that I may have to go to the Hospital someday, and that there are others who may need help today. I know a lot of us wait until we get a kick in the pants to do something, but the fact is, no one really knows when they may need access to health care."

Thank you for making 2021 a record-shattering year for the Radiothon of Hope and Healing.

Eat Your Peas

Research study opening pods full of health benefits



Dr. Michel Aliani stands in front of the Hospital's nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) machine in the Agri-Food Metabolomics Laboratory, used by his team to break down and analyze samples at a molecular level.

Your mother always told you to eat your peas. St. Boniface Hospital researcher Dr. Michel Aliani can tell you why.

Aliani is Principal Investigator, Nutritional Metabolomics Research in the Canadian Centre for Agri-Food Research in Health and Medicine (CCARM) and Principal Investigator, Nutritional Metabolomics Research, in the Division of Neurodegenerative Disorders (DND) at the Hospital.

Yellow pea flour alone contains at least 3,000 to 4,000 different compounds that researchers can measure, said Aliani. (Anything with a chemical formula is a compound: amino acids, sugars, etc.)

In the lab at St. Boniface Hospital, Aliani and his team are putting these flours and pan-breads in what researchers call a system and trying to break them down in vitro, as if they were in a stomach. In doing so, they can identify everything that's coming from the system.

"It's possible to monitor thousands of compounds," said Aliani, who is the research project lead. "How and where are they going to push a digestive system? Is it just to get energy into the body, or other reasons? By monitoring all that, researchers can see what else was pushed through digestion."

Heat treatment can reduce unpleasant flavour

Pulses are a great source of non-animal protein, are nutritious, and researchers like Aliani know they can help many patients control diabetes, hypertension, and obesity. While our country

is one of the largest producers of pulse crops in the world, Canadian families tend not to eat a lot of peas (and other pulses) largely because of their perceived unpleasant "beany" or "grassy" flavour.

Yellow peas have "good" fatty acids – Omega-3 fatty acids, for example – upon which enzymes work, creating volatile organic compounds that are responsible for the beany flavour many Canadians don't like. A heat treatment process, patented by Revtech Process Systems in France, allows researchers to control the moisture levels in peas. The process eliminates the enzymes that are responsible for the unpleasant flavour in yellow peas.

"When the thousands of compounds in peas get into the body, our digestive system modifies and breaks them down. Our goal here is to see the evolution of these compounds over time and ask, what's the impact of the rest of the metabolism?"

Aliani and his team at the St. Boniface Hospital Albrechtsen Research Centre are conducting a study in which they are monitoring 24 volunteer participants (12 men, 12 women) and making profiles of their digestive systems. Based on what they learn from the study, the researchers will eventually be able to create personalized diets – featuring yellow pea flour – that can help manage health problems like diabetes, hypertension, and obesity in these participants.

Thank you for supporting groundbreaking medical research at St. Boniface Hospital.

“Retro” Research for a Brighter Future

Dr. Renée Douville joins Division of Neurodegenerative Disorders

Within human DNA are thousands of viruses – each with potential to express itself in a helpful or harmful way.

Dr. Renée Douville holds an abiding interest in these human endogenous retroviruses (ERVs), with an eye toward treatments for neurological disorders including the devastating motor neuron disease Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).

And she’s thrilled to do so as the newest Principal Investigator with the Division of Neurodegenerative Disorders (DND) at the Hospital’s Albrechtsen Research Centre.

“It’s hard to put into words how happy I am – and my team is – to be here,” said Douville. “This is a dynamic research community. We’re surrounded by talented health researchers and I’m seeing their dedication and hard work every day.”

A Professor of Biology at the University of Winnipeg, Douville has been researching ERVs for more than 15 years.

“A good portion of human genome is viral,” she explains. “Scientists used to call it junk DNA; now we know it’s both beneficial and detrimental – for example, one of these genes is responsible for ‘gluing’ the placenta to the womb during pregnancy.”

“Others may be damaging. We’ve identified a certain endogenous retrovirus with a neurotoxic protein that shows up in ALS. It promotes neuronal damage and inflammation in the brain.

With a greater understanding of how that happens, we’re making progress toward antiviral drugs and biomarkers for clinical trials. That will be a substantial contribution for development of desperately needed treatment options.”

An estimated 3,000 Canadians are living today with ALS, for which there is currently no cure or effective treatment to halt or reverse its progress. Approximately 1,000 Canadians are diagnosed with ALS each year. Four out of five people with ALS will die within five years of diagnosis. (ALS Society of Canada)

“Anti-retrovirals are in use now to treat people living with HIV (human immunodeficiency virus). If we can use existing treatments that turned AIDS from a death sentence into a treatable disease, we can do the same for ALS patients. Anecdotal and published clinical evidence suggests they are very good.”

Few other labs in Canada and a small number in globally are studying ERVs, Douville said.

In addition to neurological disorders, literature is showing ERVs contribute to multiple sclerosis, arthritis, lupus, and numerous cancers.

While the relationship between disease and ERVs is complex, Douville believes treatments are on the horizon.

Thank you for helping scientists like Dr. Renée Douville develop treatments for challenging diseases.



Dr. Renée Douville (at right), Principal Investigator, Division of Neurodegenerative Disorders, St. Boniface Hospital Research.

Credit : David Lipnowski Photography, courtesy of UWinnipeg

The Research Dividend

From the desk of Dr. Michael Czubryt



*Dr. Michael Czubryt,
Executive Director of Research,
St. Boniface Hospital.*

The Canadian government invests billions of dollars per year in research, particularly in the biomedical and health-related fields, however, on a per-person basis, this represents only about one-tenth of the investment that the United States makes in its own research portfolio.

There is clearly room for Canada to do more. In the short term, Canada must double or triple its research investment and aim to close the funding gap over the next decade. While the initial

costs would be significant, the long-term outcomes could dramatically build our country's economic growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the incredible power of biomedical research. Never before have we learned so much, so quickly, about a global health threat. The fast-paced development and roll-out of vaccines – including the rapid deployment of mRNA-based vaccine technology – is unprecedented in our history. While Canada deployed additional research funding to bolster these efforts, this was a reactionary approach targeted at a single health challenge. Broader investment in biomedical research will boost our ability to respond to threats known and unknown.

Universities and hospitals are two of the main sites of federally-funded biomedical research activity in Canada. Research at St. Boniface Hospital represents a unique partnership between the Hospital, the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg, and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and spans neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's, cardiovascular medicine from cells to patients, and the medicinal benefits of the crops we grow and foods we eat. The adaptable training and skills of researchers also make it possible to shift to new areas, such as COVID-19-related studies.

As the Hospital celebrates 150 years of providing outstanding care to Manitobans, the St. Boniface Hospital Foundation marks 50 years of supporting research through the contributions of thousands of Manitobans. Between the Albrechtsen Research Centre and the Asper Clinical Research Institute, more than 200 academics, researchers, clinicians, scientists and students call the St. Boniface research campus home. The discoveries made here have a global impact, as shown by a recent study from Stanford University noting that ten of our researchers rank within the top 2% of scientists worldwide, in any field. Dozens of peer-reviewed scientific papers are published annually, and several spin-off companies have arisen from the St. Boniface research cluster.

This local research community is an economic engine. Typically, a significant portion of research dollars supports research personnel and students. They, in turn, pay rent or mortgages, buy cars and groceries, order take-out, cover their utilities and pay taxes, contributing to the local economy.

There's more! Read the rest of this letter at sbrc.ca/2021/09/the-research-dividend/



St. Boniface Hospital is the #1 research-intensive hospital in Western Canada for the 10th year in a row, thanks to you.

A Place of Peace

WRHA Indigenous Health program opens new space



The new WRHA Indigenous Health Smudging Room has a full-length mural by Métis artist Justine Proulx (pictured).

The scents of sweetgrass and fresh paint mingle in the brand-new Indigenous Health (IH) rooms at St. Boniface Hospital.

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority's IH program has opened a new space at the Hospital, made possible by Foundation donor support.

"Our new space enhances our ability to facilitate the practice of smudging to cleanse one's body, mind and spirit," said Bonnie Murray, Site Coordinator, WRHA Indigenous Health – Patient Services. "A new high-tech ventilation system was added that enables us to conduct smudging ceremonies indoors," she added.

The IH team was relocated to rooms in A-Block on the main floor as part of the Hospital's Emergency Department construction project (see *In Brief: Foundation News*, page 2). They are now down the hall from Volunteer Services and across the hall from the newly relocated Patient Registration Department.

As of January, the team was putting the final touches on the new space to make it inviting, warm, and peaceful, said Michael Thibert, Spiritual Cultural Care Provider, WRHA Indigenous Health – Patient Services.

Advocacy, translation services offered

The main role of WRHA IH is to support culturally safe and responsive care throughout the health region. The IH team at SBH provides language interpretation in Cree, Ojibwe and Oji-Cree for patients and families.

"We connect hospital care teams to discharge planning resources for patients returning to home to First Nations communities and connect patients and families, when needed to advocacy support. Our Spiritual Cultural Care Provider serves patients and families on their health-care journey, providing Spiritual Care and connection to ceremony and cultural practices," explained Murray.

"The Family Room and Smudging Room are accessed by



patients or their families for visiting or family meetings, or just to take break off the unit. We have a seating area with a TV, books, games, and some reading materials. There are two pull-out cots for family members that need to stay overnight."

Local Métis artist painted mural

After an extensive search of local talent, the IH team selected Justine Proulx, a Winnipeg artist of Métis heritage, to do a full-length mural on two walls in the Smudging Room.

"We commissioned Justine to paint a mural that incorporates Indigenous spirituality and represents the three main Indigenous cultural groups (First Nation, Métis and Inuit) and have added Indigenous themed décor and natural elements to contribute to the healing atmosphere of the space," said Murray.

"We selected Justine based on how she captured all of the elements we wanted in the mural – such as the Medicine Wheel, Seven Sacred Teachings, Indigenous Healing Ceremonies and that the three cultural groups were represented."

You've made St. Boniface Hospital more welcoming for Indigenous patients and their families. Thank you.

Giving. Remembering. Celebrating.

Thank you to our many compassionate donors who have chosen to make gifts to St. Boniface Hospital Foundation in honour of those listed below.

Gifts recognized were made from May 1, 2021 to November 30, 2021.

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