

# BREAKTHROUGH

Summer 2016 Newsletter | Issue 3



Summer is a time of endless possibility. At SickKids, we continue to look forward to the possibility of accelerating medical discoveries and translating them into improved care. The impact of your generous giving is clear, as we work together to bring this vision to life.

Fostering innovation is the key to unlocking the full potential of our incredible researchers, clinicians and educators. By strengthening our organization through philanthropic investments, we can fuel innovation and focus on what we do best – creating a healthier and happier future for children. These gifts are more important than ever as we look to conquer the greatest challenges in child health.

We are incredibly grateful to our leadership donors, including the Wasser Family, whose legacy of giving you will read about in the following pages. Their forward-looking vision is transforming the care we provide to children suffering from chronic pain and ensuring that more children are given a chance at life free from pain.

Thank you for your generosity, which is changing the lives of children and their families.

Sincerely,

Ted Garrard,  
President and CEO  
SickKids Foundation

## PAIN AT SICKKIDS: MORE MANAGEABLE, LESS CHRONIC

Impact in an overlooked area

Larry and Marla Wasser recently endowed the Wasser Family Chair in Anaesthesia & Pain Medicine



“Tell me what nobody is funding.” That’s the challenge Larry Wasser put to prospective partners as he and his wife, Marla, looked to expand their giving.

The Wassers’ philanthropy was first spurred by a 1995 newspaper story. A 13 year-old girl born without joints in her jaw needed surgery. They made a donation, which enabled

*Continued on next page*

Continued from previous page

Dr. Gerry Baker at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital to operate. The Wassers had found their cause: pain. Specifically, chronic pain. As Larry Wasser says, "Chronic pain affects around 25% of the North American population. Its effects on people's lives are enormous: day-to-day functioning, relationship difficulties, work and job problems, even marital breakup."

The way forward in chronic pain lay in "getting inside the problem", through expert diagnoses over time by experienced clinicians, for lifelong results. The need was a dedicated program. Mount Sinai's Wasser Pain Management Centre, established through a 1999 donation from the Wassers, began to deliver tangible results. But, knowing that continuity of care, across the lifespan, was key, the Wassers knew there was a missing piece. Mount Sinai dealt with adults. As Larry Wasser says, "We had to take our success across the street." To SickKids.

## "Tell me what no one is funding."

Dr. Stephen Brown was there from the beginning, sharing and shaping the vision of how SickKids could address pain. Dr. Mark Crawford, Chief of the Department of Anaesthesia and Pain Medicine at SickKids, has been the Wassers' partner in growing capacity – more dedicated staff, more space, and more patients seen.

Results are impressive. First and foremost, more children are living and thriving, with less pain. Wait times have been reduced. And, significantly, proof of concept has led to more funding from government, because of demonstrable down-the-road savings to the system when pain is successfully addressed early.

Larry Wasser knows the value of a leader – he had not sought to have his family name on Mount Sinai's Wasser Pain Management Centre, but had been convinced that doing so would create a destination, and encourage other donors. So, in 2015 the Wassers made a decision about a similar donation they'd made to SickKids: to endow the Wasser Family Chair in Anaesthesia and Pain Medicine at SickKids – creating a destination for a medical leader in the field of children's pain.

The Wassers have three healthy sons, whose only treatment at SickKids was a visit or two to the ER. But the Wassers want every child to enjoy the healthy lives their sons have had. For Larry and Marla, what matters most is, "knowing we've helped thousands and thousands of patients, both young and old, to be pain free."

## CELEBRATING DR. DENIS DANEMAN, CHIEF OF PAEDIATRICS



*"My legacy is the people we've nurtured, facilitated, mentored, and encouraged."*

After 10 years as Chief of Paediatrics, SickKids, and Chair of Paediatrics at The University of Toronto, Dr. Denis Daneman is stepping down, to be succeeded by Dr. Ronald Cohn.

Dr. Daneman leaves, in the words of Dr. Michael Apkon, SickKids President & CEO, "an indelible, impactful, and incredible legacy." At a recent symposium honouring Dr. Daneman, Dr. Apkon touched on Dr. Daneman's always grounded-on-principles perspective, his leadership, his deep humanity, and his commitment to SickKids and its patients. Dr. Apkon addressed Dr. Daneman directly: "Denis, you're an absolute mensch."

When asked by colleagues what he sees as his legacy, Dr. Daneman doesn't hesitate – "You. The unbelievable faculty we've hired, nurtured, protected, facilitated, mentored, and encouraged." His legacy is the people who will continue to build SickKids.

# MEDICAL PSYCHIATRY ALLIANCE

## Treating body and mind from the very first visit

Jessica Murphy would trade her mental illness – a combination of OCD (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder), anxiety, and serious depression – for a brain tumor. She's had both, and that's her way of communicating the intensity of mental illness's impact in her life. For Jessica, mental illness followed on the heels of tumour surgery, as the regenerating benign tumour pressed on her brain. Treatment at SickKids has been her lifeline. "I can always count on my SickKids family at the Centre for Brain and Mental Health to catch me when I fall," says Jessica. She's not alone – 40% of children with a physical illness will also experience a mental illness.

The Medical Psychiatry Alliance (MPA) – a partnership of SickKids, the Centre for Addiction & Mental Health, University of Toronto, and Trillium Health Partners – is designed to bring together the best minds in healthcare to harmoniously treat both body & mind – the whole patient – from the very first visit.

SickKids' Dr. Tony Pignatiello, MPA Director of Child and Youth Health and Family Services, puts it this way: "We have to



recognize that children, maybe more so than adults, need us to integrate our expertise and bring the system together so we can provide holistic care." SickKids has committed to raising \$6.8 million – an ambitious fundraising goal – of the \$60 million overall that will make this initiative possible. And it will improve the quality of life and life expectancy of those, like Jessica, with both mental and physical illness.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Within 10 years, the SickKids Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Program wants to find a **CURE**



**A pill to prevent anaphylaxis.** Research into the role of the platelet-activating factor in anaphylaxis may lead to an oral medication that will prevent life-threatening allergic reactions.



**The biology of allergy.** We're uncovering allergy's biological markers. Advanced laboratory techniques may predict who'll have an allergic reaction, its severity, and the best treatment.



**Desensitization through immunotherapy.** Controlled exposure to the food over time may teach the immune system not to respond to food with a potentially life-threatening reaction.



**Removing fear: de-labelling kids.** Kids can grow out of their allergies, or be misdiagnosed. Controlled food challenges can remove the 'allergic' label, where appropriate, allowing families to live without unnecessary fear.

PATIENT UPDATE

# KIMBERLY: STANDING STRAIGHT AND TALL

Soccer at recess, thanks to SickKids



Kimberly Buyinza, with her pre-surgery x-ray.

The best person to tell a patient story is the patient herself. And Kimberly Buyinza is one highly articulate fourteen-year-old: when asked what SickKids has meant to her, she begins, crisply; “For me, SickKids was an extraordinary opportunity...”

Kimberly had emigrated to Canada with her parents, Jennifer and Bernard, from Uganda. Soon after, the family consulted the doctors at SickKids about Kimberly’s scoliosis. Since she was still growing, the physicians, in Kimberly’s words, “said it would be better to operate when I grew up.” (Which, for Kimberly, meant having surgery at the ripe old age of 12, in 2014.)

Dr. Stephen Lewis and his team performed the surgery that straightened Kimberly’s spine. Physiotherapy followed. Before the operation, life was “tough – I was kind of restricted. I couldn’t do sports. I couldn’t hold heavy stuff.” Afterward, Kimberly was itching to dive into everything at once. Her parents encouraged a measured approach. But six months later, Kimberly was doing what she loves, full-tilt – playing soccer with her friends at recess. And singing and dancing.

She’d fallen in love with theatre young. She’d signed up to be in her school’s production of ‘Beauty and the Beast’, but surgery intervened. This year, she made her debut in ‘Aladdin’. “I liked wearing the Arabian clothes and singing the ‘Aladdin’ songs,” says Kimberley. That’s one dream fulfilled, post-surgery. But Kimberly’s ambitions stretch further. As an adult, she wants to give back, helping kids in her home country receive better education and healthcare.

The possibilities in Kimberly’s life would be far fewer without donors, like you, who’ve also decided to give back. Donors help make SickKids the hospital it is. “I was afraid before surgery,” says Kimberly, “but everyone treated me like a friend. They were my other family.”

## WAYS TO GIVE

Did you know there are many ways you can have a tremendous impact on SickKids? You can make a donation, donate stocks, leave a gift in your will, or donate your life insurance or RRSPs. If you are considering a legacy or would like more information, please contact your SickKids representative.



SickKids Foundation Major Gifts Team (from left to right): Colin Hennigar, Alicia Leon, Katie Graham, Rebecca Page, Anne-Marie Newton, Ayala Beck, Nancy Horvath, Beth Weintrop, Jennifer Ashcroft (not pictured: Denise Higashi)



For more information, please visit [www.sickkidsfoundation.com](http://www.sickkidsfoundation.com).