

A Newsletter for Friends and Supporters of  
The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation

## M. Qasim Choksi Chair in Lung Cancer Research Improving the Odds

With a five-year survival rate of approximately 15% and with cases detected in its advanced stages, lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths in North America. The M. Qasim Choksi Chair in Lung Cancer Research is working to improve these odds. Made possible through a generous gift from Foundation Board member Mr. Choksi, the Chair was awarded to Dr. Ming-Sound Tsao, a Senior Scientist and Pathologist with Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) and its research arm, the Ontario Cancer Institute.

Under Dr. Tsao's leadership, the activities of the M. Qasim Choksi Chair in Lung Cancer Research will concentrate on identifying new genes and protein markers for improving diagnosis in lung cancer. Understanding the molecular basis of lung cancer will provide insights for developing innovative therapies against the disease. Dr. Tsao's laboratory is primarily focused on conducting translational research in lung cancer involving transforming basic scientific findings into enhanced patient care and treatment.

"New developments in science have been advancing rapidly over the past decade", says Dr. Tsao. "We now know more about molecular processes that govern the biology of cells. The challenge is how to quickly translate this knowledge into clinical practice."

Currently, Dr. Tsao's team is examining molecular abnormalities present in lung cancer to better identify gene markers - sometimes referred to as poor prognosis genes. Such markers may be useful for identifying early stage lung cancer patients who have a greater risk of developing metastasis or recurrence of the tumour after surgery. These markers may indicate patients who could potentially benefit from additional treatments.

Developing treatment strategies to counteract and treat the poor prognosis gene is the basis of one new approach in cancer research and treatment. These genes could represent




Holder of the M. Qasim Choksi Chair in Lung Cancer, Dr. Ming-Sound Tsao's research focuses on improving diagnosis in lung cancer.

novel molecular targets for the development of new drugs. Through gene marker identification, future patient's treatment may be tailored accordingly to the specific molecular characteristics and abnormalities of the tumour.

Additional research spearheaded by the Chair will explore other methods for early detection. Further studies to identify genes

that are expressed only in lung cancer cells are also underway. The resulting identified genes may potentially be used as biomarkers, or flags, to aid in the early detection of lung cancer, ultimately leading to improved survival rates.

The M. Qasim Choksi Chair in Lung Cancer Research is a major advance benefiting lung cancer patients at PMH and around the world. Mr. Choksi, known as Chuck, is a long time friend and supporter of PMH who joined the Foundation Board in 1996. The generous gift was made on his behalf and on the behalf of his four brothers in memory of their father. Mr. Choksi is also Chair of the lung fundraising team and is leading a group of volunteers committed to raising funds for lung cancer research and treatment at PMH. We sincerely thank Mr. Choksi for his significant contribution to the fight against lung cancer. 



Princess Margaret  
Hospital Foundation

University Health Network

## New President & CEO Joins The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation




Paul Alofs joins PMHF as President & CEO

We welcomed Paul Alofs to the PMHF team, as our new President & CEO on September 2, 2003. Prior to assuming this

role, Paul chose to volunteer at the Hospital during the month of July, in order to gain better insight of the hospital, the staff and the patients.

Paul has acquired a solid business background in strategic planning, innovation, promotion and marketing, as well as substantial experience in the not-for-profit fundraising area. He has occupied several senior executive positions in the sales and marketing sector including: President, Strategic Business Units for MP3.com; General Manager and Executive Vice President, The Walt Disney Company - The Disney Store, Inc.; President and General Manager, BMG Music Canada, Inc.; and President, HMV Canada Ltd.

Active in his community, Paul currently serves on the Board of Covenant House Toronto. He has been an active member of the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) and has served on the Board of Branksome Hall School. In 1995, he was chosen as one of Canada's Top 40 Under 40 business leaders. 

## Tribute Dinner Honours PMH's Prostate Disease Expert



left to right: Attendees Michael Meyer, President, The Canadian Society for the Weizmann Institute of Science, Yoram Solomon, Professor, Weizman Institute of Science, Dr. John Trachtenberg, holder of the Fleck/Tanenbaum Chair in Prostatic Disease and Director of the PMH's Prostate Centre, Avigdor Scherz, Professor, Weizmann Institute, Neville w. Kirchmann, past President & CEO, PMHF, and Lionel Robins, Board Chairman, PMHF at the tribute dinner.


Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) and the Canadian Society for the Weizmann Institute of Science partnered to hold a gala dinner on June 19th in honour of Dr. John Trachtenberg, holder of the Fleck/Tanenbaum Chair in Prostatic Disease and Director of the Prostate Centre. Dr. Trachtenberg is one of the leading experts on prostate diseases. Net proceeds of the \$2.3 million raised will support further research and treatment initiatives at both the Prostate Centre at PMH and the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel.

Close to 1,200 friends and supporters of the two organizations were in attendance at the gala held at the Sheraton Centre Hotel. Notable speakers included Master of Ceremonies, former Ontario Premier Honourable William G. Davis and Stuart E. Eizenstat, Chairman, Board of Governors, Weizmann Institute of Science, who delivered an inspiring keynote address. Guests were also treated

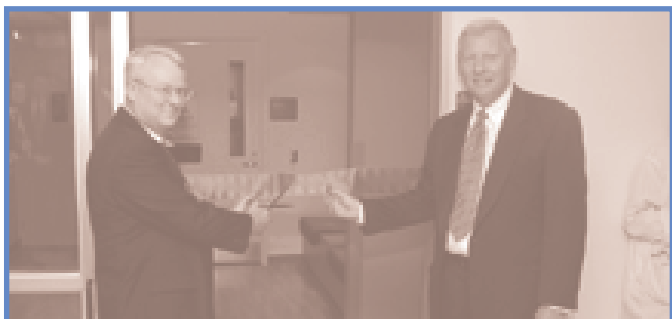
to a special video presentation about the groundbreaking clinical trial in photodynamic therapy using a promising new light activated drug called **TOOKAD**.

Dr. Trachtenberg is conducting the first clinical trials in Canada using **TOOKAD**, developed by scientists at the Weizmann Institute of Science.

When **TOOKAD**, which is derived from a plant grown in Israel, is injected into the body, it migrates to denser tumour tissues. Using a fiberoptic light guide, infrared light is applied to the tumours in a process known as photodynamic therapy. The hypothesis is that once "turned on" by the light, the otherwise harmless drug attacks cancer cells, cutting off the tumour's blood supply.

Early results are promising and it is hoped that this form of treatment will one day be applied towards combating other forms of cancer. 

## MR Simulator Ushers in New Era of Radiation Therapy



At the ribbon cutting ceremony, Tim Guertin, President, Varian Oncology Systems & Paul Alofs, President & CEO, PMHF

September 9th, 2003 marked the official grand opening of a new Magnetic Resonance (MR) Simulator that will make radiation therapy more precise and efficient.


Hosted by the Foundation and the Radiation Medicine Program, close to 40 guests joined together to celebrate the collaboration among researchers, clinical staff, corporations and individual donors. Grants from industry leaders Varian Oncology Systems and GE Medical Systems, and a generous gift from donor Susan Grange, made the new MR Simulator possible at PMH.

The Simulator provides a three-dimensional view of healthy and diseased tissue, allowing the radiation team to better understand the nature and extent of a patient's cancer.

"The MR Simulator gives us such a better definition of normal structures and diseased structures," explains Dr. David Jaffray, Head of Radiation Therapy Physics and holder of the Orey and Mary Fidani Family Chair in Radiation Physics.

"The targets we want to treat are identified with greater confidence than ever before."

The increased accuracy of the technology allows the team to apply radiation to diseased tissue with improved precision while minimizing damage to healthy tissue and reducing treatment side effects. In addition, the team is able to monitor how effective the treatment is at targeting diseased tissue thereby enabling treatment to be adapted as tissues shift and change shape over time.

The MR Simulator is one of only a handful in the world and a useful tool to aid physicians in evaluating how cancer responds to treatment, ultimately leading to improved cure rates. It is expected to bring radiation therapy to the next level in planning, guiding and following up on each patient's treatment. This advanced technology will ensure Princess Margaret Hospital continues to be a world-class facility at the forefront of medical discovery, innovation, and top-notch patient care. 

### Honouring Outstanding PMH Staff



Alistair Cunningham

Dr. Alastair Cunningham, PMH Research Scientist and leader of the Healing Journey Program, has been appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada. The award recognizes lifetime achievements and is given to those who "demonstrate excellence, courage or exceptional dedication to service that brings special credit to this country".




Avi Chakrabarty

Drs. Avi Chakrabarty, Alex Vitkin (Molecular & Structural Biology Division), and Drs. David Jaffray, Gil Privé, (Division of Medical Physics) are recent winners of the Premier's Research Excellence Award (PREA). This award is given to gifted researchers to help them attract talented students, post-doctoral fellows and research associates to their research teams.



Alex Vitkin

Dr. Ian Tannock is the recipient of the prestigious O. Harold Warwick Prize for 2003, awarded by the National Cancer Institute of Canada. The award recognizes a Canadian Scientist for their major impact on cancer control. 



David Jaffray



Gil Privé



Ian Tannock

# Journey of Hope Raises

Starting their journey at the break of dawn on Saturday, Sept 20th, and finishing on Sunday 3,972 walkers united for a two-day, 60 km journey of hope in the Weekend to End Breast Cancer. Participants honoured lives lost, celebrated survivors and demonstrated their commitment to fighting this disease. Participants raised an incredible \$12 million towards breast cancer research, education and treatment at Princess Margaret Hospital – setting a record for the largest first-year event in Canadian fundraising history. "This event was an amazing success", said Paul Alofs, President & CEO of The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation. "Not only did it raise record funds,



Walkers loosen their muscles during stretching exercises

it also raised awareness, it raised hope, and it raised nearly 4,000 passionate voices united to end breast cancer. As a walker and as an employee of the Foundation, I couldn't have been more proud to participate."

On day one, the thousands of walkers followed a 34-kilometre route lined with pink ribbons, signs of support, free lemonade stands, and with countless cheers from passers-by. The first leg of the walk ended at Downsview Park, where participants relaxed, ate dinner, got massages and bandages for their aching feet, and camped for the night in a sea of blue tents. The next day was another 26-kilometre walk along the Humber River, as walkers returned once more to the CNE Bandshell to meet



3,972 walkers embark on 2-day walk

families and supporters for the closing ceremonies. Celebrating their incredible accomplishment was an emotional experience for many participants, whose lives have



"Today was a powerful day in the fight against breast cancer" said Audrey Loeb, PMHF Board Member & Chair, Weekend to End Breast Cancer at opening ceremonies

been touched in one way or another by this devastating disease. A portion of the funds raised has already had an immediate impact via the purchase of an additional digital mammography machine. The additional mammography machine will help in detecting breast cancer

earlier. "We are delighted that this event has allowed us to purchase a digital mammography unit which will improve screening for breast cancer in our patients", said Dr. Robert Bell, VP & COO of Princess Margaret Hospital. "However, we know that participants in this event are committed to ending breast cancer... not just treating it better."



Board Chairman, Lionel Robins PMHF, also took part in the Weekend to End Breast Cancer

Over the next few weeks, Dr. Robert Bell, Dr. Christopher Paige, VP

Research, and Dr. David McCready, Head, Breast Site Group, will be putting together a report on how the money raised will be directed to support breast cancer research and education to enhance care.

# Record Breaking \$12 million



PMHF Board members Lynn Douglas and Candace Innes stretch before starting the weekend trek



Ready at the crack of dawn: Dr. Robert Bell, VP & COO, PMH and Neville W. Kirchmann, past President & CEO, PMHF



Paul Alofs, President & CEO, PMHF congratulates participants during closing ceremonies

"Curing breast cancer requires a better understanding of the disease that only research can provide. To achieve the goal of eliminating this terrible disease, we will develop a plan for breast cancer research that the walkers will be proud to support next year and in the future", added Dr. Bell.

and commitment.

The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation would like to sincerely thank the tremendous efforts of every walker, staff member, volunteer and donor who made the event such a great success. We intend to make this an annual event and plans for the next Weekend to End Breast Cancer, to be held on Sept. 10-12, 2004, are well underway. For more information or to register, visit [www.endcancer.ca](http://www.endcancer.ca) or call (416) 815-9255. e



John (past Board Chairman, PMHF) and Gail MacNaughton, also took part in the weekend walk

member, volunteer and donor who made the event such a great success. We intend to make this an annual event and

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Walkers were cheered by their families and supporters at closing ceremonies.

Several teams from UHN including Foundation Board members also took part in the event. Participants represented all walks of life, all ages and traveled as far as British Columbia. And many walked for those who could not. Joan Armstrong, 80 years of age, completed the two day trek with the aid of a walker in honour of her daughter Patti who recently lost the battle to breast cancer.

A pink flag signed by participants of the weekend walk was stationed for several weeks in the atrium at Princess Margaret Hospital as an emblem of walkers' courage, passion



## *Together We Make Life Better — Welcome New Members!*

Our fundraising campaign, Together We Make Life Better, will enable us to reach new frontiers - revolutionizing the treatment and care for cancer patients via groundbreaking research. The dedication of our volunteers will ensure that this campaign is a success. We would like to welcome the following exceptional individuals to our cancer fighting teams:

### **Breast and Gynecological Cancer**

Heather Attridge

David Kearney

### **Head & Neck, Lung and Brain**

George Karayannides

Dr. Shahida Khan

Robert J. McGavin

Malen Ng

Cathy Oberlander

Phyllis Potamianos

Richard L. Reeves

Douglas Robson

Susan Rogers

Larry Rosen

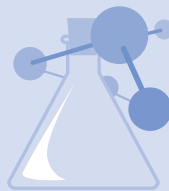
Najmul Siddiqui

Steven Swartz

Gerardina Wharton

Robert H. Wharton

Andrea White



## Research Breakthroughs

### New Role for an Old Molecule

A team of UHN researchers discovered that caspase-3—a molecule known for helping the body rid itself of aging or diseased cells—is also critical for ensuring that certain types of cells divide and develop normally. The finding will help researchers understand the multiple roles of important molecules, since any one of these molecules may offer a clue for the treatment of cancers and disorders of the immune system.

### New Class of Human Stem Cells

UHN scientists have discovered a new class of human stem cells that rapidly grow when implanted in the bone marrow of mice. Published in the June 2003 issue of the international scientific journal *Nature Medicine*, the findings are a major advancement in human stem cell research with the prospect for designing more effective cancer therapies.

The discovery marks the first time researchers have found human stem cells that rapidly rebuild a blood system. After injecting a batch of stem cells directly into the bone of mice, a new subpopulation of stem cells rapidly repopulated the blood-producing system, and produced high levels of blood cells within the first week or two after transplants, which is one to two weeks earlier than the normal rate. "If these new stem cells rebuild the blood system of a person as they have in mice in this study, it may significantly reduce the time a patient is at risk," says Dr. Armand Keating, Chief of Medical Oncology at PMH.

The discovery could benefit cancer and transplant patients whose immune systems are weakened by their treatment.

## Study Brings New Hope for Preventing Recurrence of Breast Cancer in Post-menopausal Women

A large international clinical trial found that when the drug called letrozole is given after tamoxifen, the chance of breast cancer recurring in post-menopausal women is cut by almost half. Conceived and led by Dr. Paul Goss, a Medical Oncologist at Princess Margaret Hospital, the results of the Canadian driven trial were so optimistic that an independent safety monitoring committee recommended the clinical trial end early so women receiving a placebo can be offered the chance to receive letrozole, and benefit immediately.

For those women taking letrozole, compared to those taking a placebo, the results showed a 44 per cent reduction in the likelihood of breast cancer returning. Also reported, was a reduction in internal metastases, local recurrences and new tumours in the opposite breast. As well, breast cancer deaths were reduced by half.

The encouraging results, published in the November issue of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, involved 5,187 women worldwide -1404 of them in Canada. It compared letrozole to a placebo for keeping cancer from returning in post-menopausal breast cancer survivors who had completed five years of treatment with the drug tamoxifen.

Tamoxifen is used widely to treat breast cancer in early and advanced stages. Approximately two thirds of all post-menopausal breast cancer survivors take tamoxifen to ensure the cancer does not return. The drug suppresses the effects of estrogen, which is a major factor in the growth of breast cancer. However, tamoxifen becomes ineffective after five years due to what researchers believe to be a tumour resistance developed over time, leaving these women with no known effective therapies. Until now.


The study was designed to see if letrozole could pick up where tamoxifen left off. "For the first time we have proof of an effective long-term treatment option for these women who are at risk of their breast cancer recurring," said Dr. Goss, a leading expert in novel hormone therapies for the treatment and prevention of breast cancer. "Our study ushers in an era of new hope by cutting these ongoing recurrences and deaths from breast cancer after tamoxifen by half."

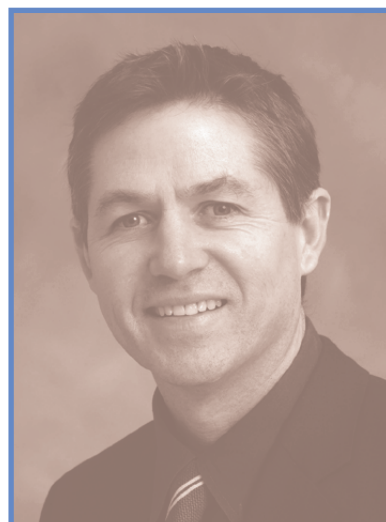
Like tamoxifen, letrozole works by halting estrogen levels. Side effects reported mimicked symptoms of menopause,

and were considered mild. Mild thinning of the bones is a possible long-term side effect and Dr. Goss cautions that women taking this drug should be advised to take calcium and Vitamin D according to standard guidelines for post-menopausal women and should be closely monitored with bone mineral density tests. "Further analysis of the data from our trial will help to clarify the extent of bone loss," says Dr Goss.

The study was conducted in conjunction with researchers from Princess Margaret Hospital, the Canadian Cancer Society, the U.S. National Cancer Institute, the Mayo Clinic and the National Cancer Institute of Canada's clinical trial group at Queen's University in Kingston.

The findings were revealed at a media conference held on October 9, 2003 in Toronto. Among reporters from around the globe, Lionel Robins, our Chairman of the Board was in attendance. "I can't describe the pride that I felt listening to Dr. Goss describe his clinical trial and remarkable results", said Lionel. "Our own Princess Margaret Hospital features very prominently in this important development. The Foundation's vision of conquering cancer actually came to life in the presentation this morning. It is this kind of world-class research and breakthrough that inspires us to raise funds at the Foundation. This news brings us a step closer to conquering cancer."

To view the published findings of the study visit the *New England Journal of Medicine* online at [www.nejm.org](http://www.nejm.org) 



*Dr. Paul Goss initiated the international study involving over 5,000 women representing nine countries*

# Life Insurance Donations Are A Win-Win Scenario

By Gordon Pape

Every business person knows the importance of creating win-win situations, in which both parties to a transaction are left feeling good about the results.

Your life insurance policy may offer that kind of win-win potential. You come away with a sense of satisfaction for having made a significant contribution to the cause of cancer research, plus what could be a significant tax break. For its part, The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation eventually receives a sizeable cash payment to advance the work on its many projects.

## Win-win!

Many people aren't aware of the hidden value in their life insurance policies, or how the asset can be put to work. In fact, there are several ways to turn your policy into a donation. Here are three examples:

- Donate a paid-up policy. If it has a cash surrender value, you'll receive a tax receipt for that amount. If you have made a taxable profit on the policy, you will have to include that in income. But depending on how long the policy has been in force, the net result could still be a significant tax saving to you.
- Transfer a policy on which you're still paying premiums. You'll receive a tax receipt for the current cash surrender value. If you continue to pay the premiums, you'll receive an annual tax receipt for them as well.
- Buy a new policy. If the Foundation is named as the owner and beneficiary, you'll receive a tax receipt for all the premiums you pay. This is a useful approach for donors who want to make an important commitment but don't have the cash available at the present time.

*For more information, contact Adriana Pierik, Associate Director, Gift Planning for the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation at (416) 945-6562.*

Gordon Pape is a well-known financial author and is a member of the Campaign fundraising team. He is donating a portion of his royalties from his 2004 Buyer's Guide to Mutual Funds and 2004 Buyer's Guide to RRSPs to the Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation.

## Survey Reminder!

We hope you enjoyed reading Cancerlink. Please take a moment to answer our short survey enclosed with this issue. Your feedback will help us improve Cancerlink.

## Cancerlink is a publication of The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation.

**Our Vision:** *To Conquer Cancer.*

**Our Mission:** To raise and steward the funds necessary for breakthrough research, compassionate care and exemplary teaching at Princess Margaret Hospital, Canada's cancer centre.

## How to reach us

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The Princess Margaret Hospital Foundation is dedicated to supporting excellence in health care by raising funds for breakthrough research, compassionate care and exemplary teaching at Princess Margaret Hospital. You may request to be removed from our fundraising list at any time by contacting us at 416-946-2114 or at [listremovalpmhf@uhn.on.ca](mailto:listremovalpmhf@uhn.on.ca)