

Bastable-Potts Asthma Research Fund

Asthma Society of Canada
February 12, 2014

In December of 2013, the Asthma Society of Canada (ASC) received a bequest from the estate of Gail Suzanne Potts, who died on November 11, 2012. A widow without children, she left her estate to five charities: York Central Hospital Foundation, University of Toronto, The Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre Foundation, the Hospital for Sick children Foundation and the Asthma Society of Canada. The ASC has received the sum of \$500,000 from the Estate. The will stipulates the following:

To pay or transfer to the Asthma Society of Canada, at 2306-4950 Yonge Street, Toronto, Ontario, M2N 6K1, the sum of five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000.00) to establish the Bastable-Potts Asthma Research Trust. The purpose of this Trust is to fund research into adult onset asthma in perpetuity. The donor intends that these funds contributed for this Trust be retained, administered and managed by the Board of Directors of the Asthma Society of Canada. The income earned from this Trust is to be used to fund adult onset asthma research to find the cause, prevention and cure. The research projects are to be selected by the Asthma Society of Canada's Research Committee.

If circumstances should at some future time make it impractical to continue using the income from this endowment for the designated purpose, then the Asthma society's Board of Directors may re-designate the purpose of the Trust Income providing that The Trust shall continue to bear the name Bastable-Potts Asthma Research Trust and the amended terms are in keeping, so far as possible, with the spirit and original intent of this trust.

The intent of Mrs. Potts seems clear:

- The ASC is to establish a fund for research, to be named the Bastable-Pott Asthma Research Trust;
- That only the income of the fund be used for its purposes and that the capital of the fund be preserved (however I have been advised that trust funds such as this may not legally be tied up for a period of more than 20 years);
- That the funds distribute should promote research into the cause, prevention and cure of adult onset asthma (with which her mother suffered);
- That the ASC has the power to distribute those funds through a Research Committee (that presently does not exist, and the Medical and Scientific Committee for all intents and purposes is only one members, so for now it would fall to the Board of Directors to do such);

- And that the Board has the power to adapt the purposes of the funds to changing circumstances, though, should maintain its name and, so far as possible, keep within the spirit and original intent of this gift.

Adult Onset Asthma Briefing Note

The cause of asthma is not fully known but both heredity (genetics) and environment appear to be factors. The causes of asthma exacerbations are better known, but still not fully understood. When a doctor makes a diagnosis of asthma in people older than 20, it is known as adult-onset asthma. People may be diagnosed well into their forties, fifties and sixties.

Among those who may be more likely to get adult-onset asthma are:

- Women who are having hormonal changes, such as those who are pregnant or who are experiencing menopause;
- Women who take estrogen following menopause for 10 years or longer;
- People who have just had certain viruses or illnesses, such as a cold or flu;
- Obese people;
- People with allergies, especially to cats (at least 30% of adult asthma cases are triggered by allergies);
- People who are exposed to environmental toxins and irritants, such as particulate matter, pesticides, tobacco smoke, mold, dust, feather beds, perfume. These environmental factors may be outside or inside the home or workplace and may be occupational in nature.

Current Research in Canada

A scan of research in Canada (and worldwide) indicates that this is an area of great need for further research. Very few studies are currently being done on adult onset asthma, particularly in Canada.

Relevant research that is notable includes:

- Adult asthma and gender (the work of Dr. Anna Day, University of Toronto published in 2006)
- Pregnancy and related issues and asthma (the work of Faranak Firoozi, University of Montreal, published with some controversy in 2008)
- Occupational Asthma (work-related exposures) – Australian Anthony Johnson did research in Canada with some Canadians including Pierre Ernst (McGill) and Malcolm Sears (McMaster), published in 2000). Mieke Koehoorn at UBC's School of Population and Public health is doing work in this area). Nicola Cherry, University of Alberta had an AllerGen project 2005-2007 on occupational health and adult onset asthma.
- Environment and asthma (Michael Bauer, Chris Carlsten and others in Vancouver doing work on traffic related pollution and asthma in children and adults, published last year).
- Smoking, allergies, obesity and gender in adult onset asthma (Yue Chen, University of Ottawa some recent work in this area).

Practical Considerations

There is actually a very small amount of research being done in this field in Canada. Research is primarily being done in Australia, Europe and the United States.

This fund will generate approximately \$20,000 per year (at 4%) which is not a significant amount to undertake new research.

It is an amount that could be used, however, to acknowledge research in this area and, for the first few years draw attention to the need for more research. Such attention should be directed to promoting research and collaborative activities to find the causes, prevention and cure of adult onset asthma.

Some administrative charge to the Fund paid to the ASC for the investment, management and direction of the Fund's revenue would be appropriate.

Motion for the Board of Directors:

The Asthma Society of Canada use the funds transferred from the estate of Gail Potts to establish the Bastable-Potts Asthma Research Fund. The purpose of this Fund is to promote, recognize, and fund research into adult onset asthma. The Fund will be retained, administered and managed by the Board of Directors of the Asthma Society of Canada in perpetuity for which a reasonable fee may be transferred from the Fund to the Society. The income earned from this Trust is to be used to promote, recognize and fund adult onset asthma research to find its cause, prevention and cure. The research projects are to be selected by the Asthma Society of Canada's Board of Directors upon recommendation of its Medical and Scientific Committee. The terms of this Fund are to be reviewed every three years to ensure that the spirit of this bequest is maintained while being of practical use in fulfilling the Asthma Society of Canada's vision of every child and adult with asthma living active, symptom free lives.

Recommendation for target uses of the Fund:

That the Bastable-Potts Fund be used to fund a prize for innovative research into one of the following areas each year for the next six years:

- Gender as a factor in Adult Onset Asthma (AOA)
- Outdoor Environmental exposure as a factor in AOA
- Occupational exposures as a factor AOA
- Atopy (allergy) as a factor in AOA
- Infection as a factor in AOA
- Smoking as a factor in AOA

Recommendation for a 2014 Award to Launch the Bastable-Potts Asthma Research Fund:

Given that this year's For Life and Breath conference is focusing on Allergy, Asthma and the Environment, it is proposed that the first award be given to a researcher in the field of outdoor environmental exposure as a factor in AOA. The award would recognize innovative research done by a Canadian researcher that adds to the body of knowledge regarding AOA and its relationship to environmental exposures.

It is further recommended that the amount of the first award be \$10,000 and that an additional amount up to \$10,000 be used to facilitate the winner being in attendance to receive the award, to promote the new fund and to publicize this year's award winner.

