

# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



# Everyone Deserves to Breathe Easy

Every day 317 Canadians are newly diagnosed with asthma. Thanks to your support, we can help Canadians with asthma live healthy, symptom-free lives. Our partners, donors, and community allow us to continue providing evidence-based education initiatives, world-class asthma research, and to raise the voice of the Canadian asthma community.

Asthma Canada is the only national charity solely devoted to improving the lives of Canadians living with asthma and respiratory allergies. For nearly 50 years, we have proudly served as the voice of all Canadians affected by this chronic disease.

*Our mission is to help Canadians with asthma lead healthy lives through education, advocacy and research.*

*Our vision is a future without asthma.*



# Asthma in Canada



## KIDS WITH ASTHMA

More than 850,000 children under the age of 14 have asthma, making it one of the most common chronic diseases among children and a leading cause for both school absenteeism and hospitalization.

## THE HUMAN TOLL

An estimated 250 Canadians with asthma lose their lives to asthma each year. That means 4 to 5 Canadian families lose a loved one to asthma each week. With proper asthma education, many of these deaths can be prevented.



## UNEQUAL BURDEN

Some Canadians are hit harder by asthma; it is 40% more prevalent among First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities than the general Canadian population.

## SEVERE ASTHMA

Severe Asthma is a greater risk to health than more easily controlled types of asthma and affects an estimated 150,000-250,000 Canadians.



## ASTHMA PREVALENCE

Across Canada, asthma affects the lives of more than 3.8 million Canadians, and is the third most common chronic disease.

## DID YOU KNOW?

An estimated 317 Canadians are diagnosed with asthma every single day.





# Joint Statement From CEO & Chair



2021 was marked by tumultuous change in the everyday life of all Canadians. Since the outset of the global pandemic in 2020, those with chronic lung conditions especially have had to adapt and learn how to live in this new environment of uncertainty.

In this new environment, it has been our mission to provide guidance and crucial educational resources for the immunocompromised individuals who need it most. Living amid a pandemic is extremely difficult in the best of circumstances – it is even more so with a chronic disease like asthma.

This is why our programs, resources, and educational materials were more important than ever. At Asthma Canada, we believe that every Canadian with asthma deserves a symptom-free life. This is the maxim that guides all our work, and this year and every year, our work is geared toward making this a reality.

A life free of symptoms starts with the power of education and self-advocacy. In 2021, we published an [Asthma Control Digital Toolkit](#) which includes updated important information about asthma control, an Asthma Red & Yellow Flags Checklist to reflect on one's symptoms, and an Asthma Action Plan built to inspire Canadians to get control of their asthma and take action.

We advocated on behalf of the Canadian asthma community through the development of three position statements. We published two position statements urging federal, provincial, and municipal governments to prioritize those with lung conditions in the vaccine rollout and, later in the year, to provide the third dose of the vaccine for severely immunocompromised individuals as quickly and efficiently as possible. We also published a position statement on the overuse of oral corticosteroids (OCS), with numerous



recommendations for healthcare providers and policymakers, to raise awareness about the adverse effects of prolonged OCS use and the importance of alternative therapies to improve health outcomes.

We also participated in the [Green Ribbon Panel](#) advocating for sustainable, clean air, and continued to support the implementation of a national pharmacare plan.

In partnership with other healthcare organizations, we bolstered our National Research Program with additional grants. We have added a third award for PhD researchers as part of the Graduate Student Awards, as well as partnered on new Early Career Researcher Awards in Asthma for 2022, which will support emerging Canadian researchers in the early stages of their career. Our National Research Program continues to fund research in both early- and late-onset asthma; by investing in Canadian asthma research, we take one step closer to our vision of a future without asthma.

We are grateful for the support of our partners, donors, and community who make it possible for us deliver programs and services that are important to our community. Together, we can achieve remarkable things, and we have big plans for the future. Thank you for standing with us even in the most difficult of times; with your support, there is truly no limit to what we can achieve.

Vanessa Foran  
President & CEO

Vibhas Bapat  
Chair



# Navigating the pandemic

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Throughout 2021, one of our foremost priorities was standing by, and standing up for our community as the COVID-19 pandemic continued.

Navigating a pandemic with a chronic respiratory disease like asthma is no easy task.

The past few years have impacted how our community accesses care, experiences daily life, and has created many new challenges for those living with chronic diseases.

As a respiratory health charity, we recognized that the Canadian asthma community needed us more in 2020 and 2021 than ever before.

Throughout the year, there was a substantial increase in demand for our services, and it was our goal to meet the needs of those who rely on our resources and support programs such as our Asthma & Allergy HelpLine, Speaker Series Webinars, and online resources - all of which are free to access on [asthma.ca](https://asthma.ca).

We will continue to offer the Canadian asthma community guidance through the pandemic and provide new information as it becomes available.

Above all, we ensure Canadians with asthma have the resources and support they need to live symptom-free lives.





# Education

Empowering Canadians with asthma to take control of their disease and live symptom-free lives through evidence-based resources and support programs.

## Evidence-based resources



Continuing our ongoing efforts to increase rates of immunization among adults affected by respiratory conditions, the Lung Vaccination Working Group, led by Asthma Canada, published [\*Optimizing Vaccination Rates in Canadians with Lung Disease\*](#).

We also published a new resource, [\*Asthma Canada's Asthma Control Digital Toolkit\*](#).



This digital toolkit includes education about asthma control, an Asthma Red & Yellow Flags Checklist to reflect on your symptoms, and an Asthma Action Plan.



## Speaker Series Webinars

Our Speaker Series connects the asthma community to new research, best practices, and the general education that is necessary to make informed choices about their health.

In 2021, we featured a 3-part series on Asthma Basics, including an introduction to asthma, asthma triggers, and asthma medications.

We also hosted an additional presentation on Nasal Polyps and Asthma. The webinar gave an overview of what to expect when receiving a diagnosis of nasal polyps, how nasal polyps relate to asthma and Severe Asthma, and the treatment options for nasal polyps in Canada.

### Special Webinar Presentation

## Nasal Polyps and Asthma

with  
**Dr. Shaun Kilty, MD, FRCSC**

**Wed. October 27, 2021**  
**11:00 am (EST)**

[\*Browse Asthma Canada's Webinar Library here!\*](#)



## Asthma & Allergy HelpLine

Staffed by four Certified Respiratory Educators across Canada, the HelpLine is a free, bilingual service for those who have pressing questions about their asthma while healthcare systems remain overwhelmed due to the pandemic.

A HelpLine follow-up survey has been live for over a year, and the majority of respondents indicated they appreciated the HelpLine's service, and that they would rate their experience as the "best experience possible."



"Tracy was very insightful and her help was very much appreciated. What an excellent service."

"I got a very useful, comprehensive, easy to understand answer to the question I asked."

"Thanks to the amazing educators and team of the Asthma and Allergy helpline for your thoughtful response and immediate reply. I feel comforted to receive your advice and recommendations regarding my child's asthma condition. Thank you!"

## Asthma Canada Member Alliance



The Asthma Canada Member Alliance (ACMA) is the community arm and voice of Asthma Canada. ACMA members represent the full spectrum of those affected by asthma in Canada, and is comprised of people living with asthma, parents and caregivers, healthcare professionals, and anyone who has been affected by asthma.

ACMA members receive ongoing updates on all our educational resources and access to a variety of programs to help manage their asthma and live healthy, active lives.

Interested in joining the ACMA community?

[Sign up for a free membership today!](#)



# Advocacy

Raising the voice of the asthma community across the country on important issues like access to medication, clean air & energy, and vaccination.

## Access to Treatment and Care

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*We believe all Canadians living with asthma should have equitable and timely access to medications based on the best possible health outcomes, rather than ability to pay.*

In 2021, we advocated for Canadians with asthma at the federal level through our participation and membership in the [Health Charities Coalition of Canada](#), and the [Best Medicines Coalition of Canada](#).

We also continued to support the Government's commitment to reduce costs and access to necessary treatments and medications by providing Patient Evidence Submissions on new asthma medications and ongoing input on the implementation of a national pharmacare plan.

## Sustainable Clean Air

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Sustainable, clean energy is necessary for the health, well-being and prosperity of all. On behalf of people living with asthma, we support initiatives which promote clean energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Asthma Canada continues to be an active member of the [Green Ribbon Panel](#), a group of healthcare, environmental, and business professionals focused on developing practical solutions to tackle climate change and ensure economic growth in Canada.

In 2021, Asthma Canada took part in the [Green Ribbon Panel's submission](#) for the Ministry of Energy, Northern Development and Mines to review Ontario's long-term energy planning framework.

Asthma Canada supports clean energy technologies that fight against climate change and provide clean, breathable air for all Canadians with lung conditions.





# Lung Vaccination Working Group

In 2018, Asthma Canada partnered with several national healthcare organizations interested in working collaboratively to raise awareness about the importance of vaccination and to increase rates of immunization among adults affected by respiratory conditions.

The importance of immunization is more important now than ever.

Within Canada, vaccine uptake continues to be a significant area of concern, especially when it comes to high-risk populations like those with lung conditions or other respiratory diseases.

For those living with asthma, vaccination is crucial for disease management.

This is why we continue to lead the Lung Vaccination Working Group with other healthcare and patient advocacy groups – to establish and implement an evidence-based strategy to increase vaccination rates in our community.



## COVID-19 Position Statements

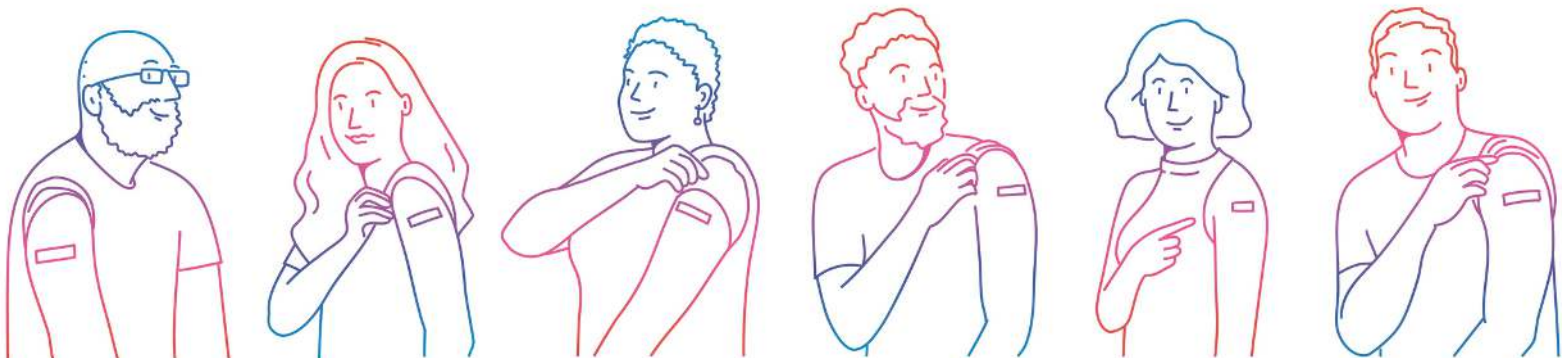
As part of the Canadian Thoracic Society's COVID-19 Respiratory Roundtable panel representing Canadians living with lung disease, Asthma Canada signed a joint statement titled *Prioritization of Canadians with Lung Disease in COVID-19 Vaccination Rollout*.

This statement urges federal, provincial, and territorial governments to prioritize people living with lung disease who are at higher risk for more serious COVID-19 complications in the vaccination rollout.

Later in November, alongside other health organizations we also published a statement encouraging all provinces and territories in Canada to implement the National Advisory Committee on Immunization's (NACI) recommendations for third dose of the COVID-19 vaccine for moderately to severely immunocompromised individuals – like those with Severe Asthma – as quickly, clearly, and effectively as possible.

[Read the statements here!](#)

Materials like our [Access to Health Care amid COVID-19](#) short report and other resources are available [for free on asthma.ca](#).



# Oral Corticosteroid (OCS) Overuse Campaign



It is time to protect people with asthma from oral corticosteroids (OCS) overuse and to recognize overuse for what it is: a warning sign that it is time to improve asthma management. Today, it is recognized that OCS overuse poses serious health risks and must be acknowledged as a potential red flag warning sign that one's asthma may be poorly controlled, requiring reassessment by a qualified professional.



## *As part of the OCS Overuse Campaign, we:*

- conducted a literature review in April 2021;
- developed an OCS Consensus Statement, based on the latest available evidence related to optimal OCS use;
- and supported the development of a communications plan to spread awareness to the Canadian asthma community.

In 2021, we raised awareness and outlined the concerns of overexposure to OCS. Through our Consensus Committee of healthcare professionals and patients, we developed a position statement which we will inform much of our advocacy and education awareness work in 2022.

## OCS Position Statement

For decades, OCS have been an important treatment for the management of Severe Asthma, uncontrolled asthma, and acute asthma exacerbations. However, new research indicates that if long-term OCS use is required, it should be at the lowest possible dose with an aim to discontinue or provide alternative treatment. This position statement was published with numerous recommendations for healthcare providers and policy-makers and to raise awareness about the adverse effects of prolonged OCS use.

[\*Read the Position Statement here\*](#)



### **Position Statement: Appropriate Use of Oral Corticosteroids in Asthma**

**It is time to protect people with asthma from oral corticosteroids (OCS) overuse and to recognize overuse for what it is: a warning sign that it is time to improve asthma management.**

For decades, OCS have been an important treatment for the management of severe asthma, uncontrolled asthma, and acute asthma exacerbations in children and adults. However, overwhelming evidence shows that OCS can carry serious health risks. Today, OCS use needs to be recognized as a potential red flag warning sign that a person's asthma may be poorly controlled, requiring reassessment by a qualified professional to optimize asthma management. Management strategies may include support to improve medication adherence, device technique, and/or an updated treatment plan. Where OCS treatment is needed, the aim for treatment should be short-term with the lowest effective dose. If long-term OCS use is required, it should be at the lowest possible dose with an aim to discontinue or provide alternative treatment.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Invest in the education of healthcare professionals, including allergists/immunologists, respirologists, certified respiratory educators, primary care providers, emergency care providers, and pharmacists, to adopt OCS-sparing strategies while respecting the values and preferences of people with asthma through shared decision-making.
2. Invest in the education of and tools for primary and emergency care providers to identify and rapidly refer people with asthma who are prescribed OCS, to a specialist and/or certified respiratory educator to improve management.
3. Plan for and invest in asthma specialists, including respirologists and allergists/immunologists, primary care providers, and certified respiratory educators to optimize asthma management and improve asthma control.
4. Create or update standards, policies, care pathways, rapid referral mechanisms, and other relevant materials and interventions to reflect OCS-sparing interventions.
5. Plan for and invest in the full array of asthma treatment options, both pharmacological and non-pharmacological, to support the ability of people with asthma to achieve control.





# Research

Supporting the next generation of leading asthma researchers to bring us closer to our vision of a future without asthma

## National Research Program

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*Asthma Research underpins all that we do.* Investing in emerging Canadian researchers and supporting their promising research takes real strides towards better treatment options for Canadians living with asthma.

*This is why we added a third award to our National Research Program in 2021.* We now award three \$20,000 grants to student researchers working at the PhD level.

These grants support researchers investigating early- and late- onset asthma. The goal is to provide researchers who are in the early stages of their career the support they need to become the researchers of tomorrow and improve treatment options for Canadians with asthma.



### NEW: Early Career Researcher Award in Asthma

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Asthma Canada, AstraZeneca Canada, CAAIF, CIHR-ICRH and the Canadian Lung Association (CLA) are pleased to announce the launch of a new funding opportunity focused on asthma research. This grant encourages young researchers to continue to find creative, innovative solutions and to strive to find a cure.

# Meet our Researchers



## Caren (Xiaoshu) Cao

*2021 Recipient, Bastable-Potts Graduate Student Research Award*

Currently pursuing a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Toronto, Caren studies the mechanisms of asthma and sleep apnea, and how the two are interrelated. Her previous work funded by Asthma Canada was published in the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*.



## Andrew Kouri

*2021 Recipient, Bastable-Potts Graduate Student Research Award*

Andrew is a respirologist and PhD student at the University of Toronto with an interest in airways diseases and how technology can be leveraged to improve the care of patients with asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.



## Samantha Lee

*2021 Recipient, Goran-Enhoring Graduate Student Research Award*

Samantha is a third year PhD student at the University of Manitoba. Her research aims to clarify the molecular mechanisms underlying the developmental origins of childhood asthma using longitudinal DNA methylation microarray data from several human cohorts.



## Third Annual Asthma Survey Report

This year, we published our third Annual Asthma Survey Report, which highlighted that Canadians with asthma – especially at-risk groups like those in lower income brackets, young adults, and those with Severe Asthma – are continuing to experience challenges. In the survey, respondents address how their mental health and well-being is affected on a daily basis because of their asthma. These are findings which, despite a global pandemic, remain consistent with results from our 2019 and 2020 surveys.





A close-up photograph of a person's chest and hands. The person is wearing a light blue t-shirt. Their hands are holding a large, red, paper-like heart against their chest. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting. The text 'Standing Strong Together.' is overlaid on the upper part of the image.

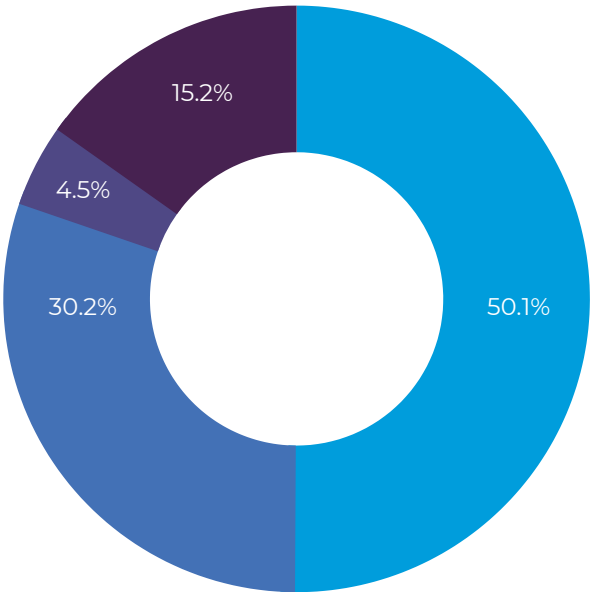
# Standing Strong Together.

Your support allows us to do what we do best: help Canadians with asthma lead healthy lives through education, advocacy and research.



Sources of Revenue

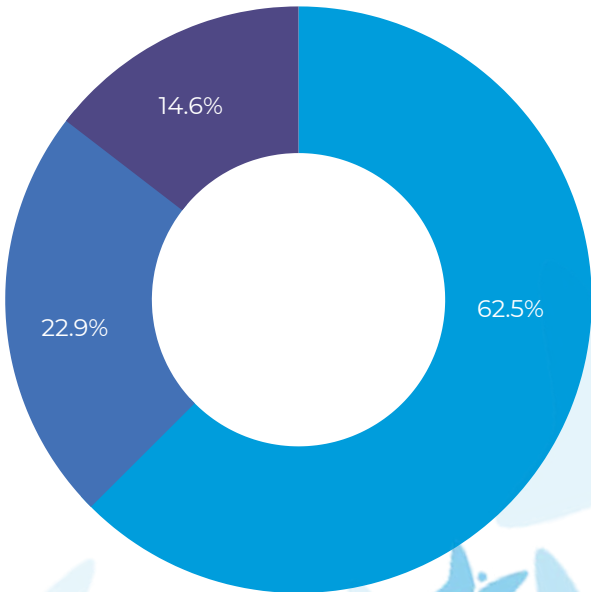
- Corporate & Foundation Giving  
\$601,347
- Individual Giving & Bequests  
\$362,256
- Asthma & Allergy Friendly  
Certification Program  
\$54,539



Investment & Other  
\$182,497

Expenses

- Mission Delivery  
\$454,685
- Fundraising  
\$166,728
- Administration  
\$105,910





# Thank you.

We could not do what we do without you. For the generosity and dedicated support of our partners, donors, and community throughout 2021 - we are grateful.

Thanks to your kindness, we can deliver vital programs and services to those who need them most.

Together, we are building a future without asthma.



2020/2021

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# *You can make a difference*

We believe every Canadian deserves the right to breathe easy.

When you donate to Asthma Canada, your contribution helps make a brighter future for Canadians with asthma. Whether a one-time, monthly or legacy gift, there are lots of ways to give. You can even donate your old vehicle or host a fundraiser of your own. Your gift, whatever form it takes, will contribute to educational resources, world-class asthma research, and advocacy on behalf of all Canadians with asthma.

If you'd like to learn more about how you can give back, visit [asthma.ca/get-involved/ways-to-give/](https://asthma.ca/get-involved/ways-to-give/), email [fundraising@asthma.ca](mailto:fundraising@asthma.ca), or call 1-866-787-4050 (ext. 109).





# Asthma.ca<sup>TM</sup>

## Asthma Canada



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