



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



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Who we are

Asthma Canada is the only national, patient-driven charity solely devoted to enhancing the quality of life for people living with asthma and respiratory allergies. For nearly 50 years, Asthma Canada has proudly served as the national voice for Canadians living with asthma.

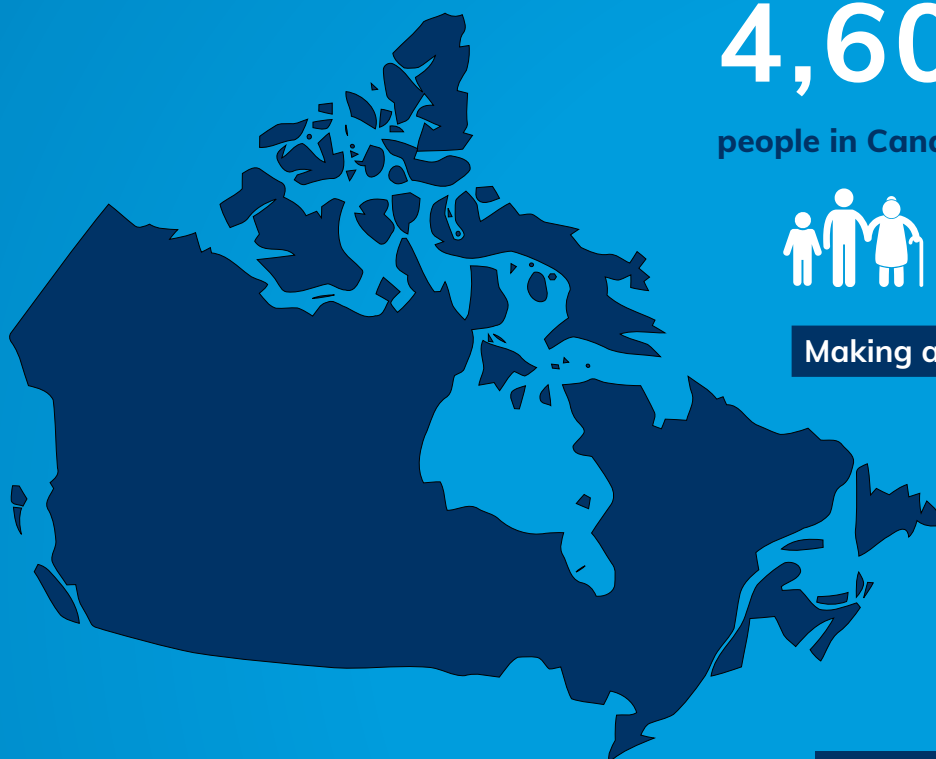
Our mission is to help Canadians with asthma lead healthy lives through education, advocacy and research.

Our vision is a future without asthma.





Asthma Prevalance in Canada



4,600,000+

people in Canada are living with asthma



Including:

- Over 900,000 children under 19
- Over 800,000 adults over 65

Making asthma Canada's third most common chronic disease

As many as

465,000

have severe asthma

Including:

- Over 45,000 children under 19

The toll of asthma in Canada:



250

people lose their lives to asthma each year



\$4.2 billion

the expected cost of asthma to the Canadian economy by 2033

317

people are diagnosed with asthma each day



80,000

visits are made to the emergency room each year because of asthma attacks



Joint Statement From CEO & Chair



2023 was a year of transition for Asthma Canada and a time of concern for the more than 4.6 million Canadians living with asthma, given the growing impact of climate change and health system challenges. It marked the second year of Asthma Canada's 2022-2024 Strategic Plan, aimed at advancing progress in three strategic mission pillars: patient education and support, advocacy, and research.

Our year commenced with a leadership transition as Jeffrey Beach assumed the role of Asthma Canada's new President & Chief Executive Officer. With a strong background in the non-profit sector and Canadian health charity landscape, Jeffrey is excited to lead Asthma Canada during this pivotal time for the organization and the asthma community. We extend our gratitude to Jenna Reynolds for her skillful and steady leadership as Interim CEO. Having been with Asthma Canada for a decade, Jenna facilitated a seamless transition in the interim staff leadership role.

Asthma is often downplayed and, in some cases, hidden by those affected. The alarming statistic that **upwards of 50% of Canadians with asthma have poorly controlled symptoms underscores the urgency of our efforts.**

We are committed to addressing this issue through awareness and education initiatives, such as the Red Flags campaign, which highlights symptoms indicative of uncontrolled asthma.

On World Asthma Day in May we unveiled Canada's first [Delphi Consensus Study](#) on Severe Asthma. This study served as the foundation for our advocacy and awareness efforts throughout the year, urging governments and decision-makers to acknowledge the challenges faced by patients and healthcare systems and collaborate on implementing the study's key recommendations.

In the spring and summer, Asthma Canada swiftly responded to unprecedented wildfires, which significantly impacted air quality nationwide, exacerbating symptoms for Canadians living with asthma and other respiratory ailments. This period underscored the critical importance of Asthma Canada and its programs and services to the Canadian asthma community.

Research continues to enhance our understanding of asthma and unlock treatment options, even for severe cases.



We celebrated our advancements in research, highlighted by the expansion of graduate student awards and grants for early and late-onset asthma research.

Asthma Canada relies on the generous support of donors, partners, and sponsors. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to individuals, families, volunteers, foundations, and corporate partners who have invested in our mission.

As we reflect on Asthma Canada's impact in 2023, it is imperative to look ahead to 2024 and beyond. Our vision of a future without asthma remains central to our endeavors.

We express our gratitude to our dedicated staff, Board of Directors, and volunteers for keeping this vision and our mission in focus in their work.

We urge everyone to join us by donating to the cause, advocating for improved asthma care and access to medication and clean air, and raising awareness about the disease and how Asthma Canada supports patients in leading healthier lives and advocating for their optimal care.



Jeffrey Beach
President & CEO
Asthma Canada



Vibhas Bapat
Chair
Asthma Canada

Josh Rheaume's Asthma Story



“Growing up with severe asthma was like living in a constant battle with my own body. Hospital stays were a regular occurrence, and even the simplest activities felt like daunting challenges. I remember desperately trying to participate in sports, only to end up on the bench, wheezing and reaching for my inhaler, feeling like I was letting everyone down.

School was no refuge either. Despite having doctor's notes and explanations for my absences, I felt like no one truly understood what I was going through. Teachers and principals often dismissed my struggles, expecting me to perform like any other student, unaware of the immense toll my asthma took on my daily life.

But everything changed in June 2020. After years of unintentionally abusing my asthma medications and grappling with my family's medical history, I reached a breaking point. I realized I couldn't keep living in fear of my own lungs. So I decided to take matters into my own hands.

I started small, running just 500 meters at a time, taking breaks to use my inhaler when needed. Gradually, I pushed myself further, reaching distances I never thought possible. One day, I ran a full 25 kilometers—a monumental achievement considering where I'd started.



With each step, I felt like I was reclaiming control over my life. For the first time, my asthma felt manageable. I wasn't constantly afraid of triggering an attack, and I could finally enjoy physical activity without fear holding me back.

Looking back, I can't help but wonder how different my life could have been if I'd had access to better support and education about managing my asthma earlier on. That's why I'm passionate about advocating for improved healthcare for people like me.

I believe that early detection, personalized trigger management, and comprehensive patient education are essential in helping individuals with severe asthma live fulfilling lives. Empowering patients with knowledge about their condition and providing access to resources like

Asthma Canada's HelpLine, we can make a real difference in people's lives.

My journey has taught me the importance of resilience, self-empowerment, and the transformative impact of education and support services. I'm committed to using my experiences to advocate for change within the healthcare system, ensuring that no one else feels failed by the system like I did.

Together, we can create a world where people with severe asthma can thrive, free from the limitations of their condition, and I'm determined to be a part of that change."

In October 2023, Josh ran his first marathon as part of Team Asthma Canada, feeling that his asthma is now properly under control for the first time in his life.





Education

Asthma Canada encourages self-management and prevention by helping our community take control of their symptoms.



“Someone called me from Asthma Canada last year. I cried after the call. She cared more than any doctor I have seen. Thank you so much.”

HelpLine User

Asthma & Allergy HelpLine

Managing asthma and allergies can pose challenges, but you're not facing them alone. Our bilingual Asthma & Allergy HelpLine, staffed by Certified Respiratory Educators (CREs), offers unwavering support, and is entirely free to access.

Whether you choose to connect via phone or email, our HelpLine ensures you receive the latest information, educational materials, and practical guidance on a range of topics. From navigating the complexities of newly diagnosed asthma to dealing with severe symptoms, pinpointing triggers, and exploring treatment avenues, we're here for you every step of the way.

In 2023, we experienced a notable surge in inquiries, especially during the summer months, with many of these inquiries linked to wildfires. Impressively, almost 90% of our users rated our service exceptionally, with a stellar 9/10 or 10/10.

Asthma Canada Member Alliance

The Asthma Canada Member Alliance (ACMA) is a community of all those affected by asthma including patients, caregivers, educators, and healthcare professionals. We leverage the collective voice of this community and it is this voice, that informs and shapes the work we do.

We consistently communicate with our community throughout the year through email, social media, phone and in-person to ensure they are informed about all our projects, initiatives and developments relevant to those impacted by asthma. We extend sincere appreciation to our volunteers, including ACMA members, whose unwavering commitment significantly improves the lives of asthma patients and their families on a daily basis.

Embrace the opportunity to [join ACMA today](#) and become an integral part of the asthma community.





Digital Resources

In 2023, our repository of self-management and self-advocacy resources and tools continued to expand, benefitting everyone impacted by asthma. Regular updates to our website and social media channels ensured the prompt dissemination of information regarding advancements in asthma care and the asthma community.

[Explore these invaluable resources today.](#)



Get Help ▾ What We Do ▾ About Us ▾ News & Updates Resources Get Involved

You've had an asthma attack. Now what?

Learn the steps to take after you've had an asthma attack

[Read our Asthma Attack Toolkit](#)



Speaker Series Webinars

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

In 2023, we hosted webinars on:

- **Understanding Clinical Trials** with Dr. Dawn Richards
- **Understanding RSV/Respiratory Syncytial Virus** with Dr. Alan Kaplan
- **Understanding Aspirin-Exacerbated Respiratory Disease (AERD)** with Dr. Juan Ruiz



Our Webinar Library continues to grow. [View all our past sessions.](#)

Workplace Program

Promoting a healthier workforce improves employee well-being, productivity, and quality of life while reducing health-related absences. On World Asthma Day 2023, we launched our new "Improving Asthma in the Workplace Program" to heighten awareness and encourage better asthma management among workers. Workplaces received comprehensive resources on asthma education, triggers, and control measures.

"There is an epidemic of people struggling quietly with asthma - most of them unaware of how much better things could be, and many primary care providers are so overwhelmed that the issue is often not brought up."

Dr. Sam Campbell, Professor of Emergency Medicine, Dalhousie University



We actively raise awareness of factors that can exacerbate asthma and promote essential precautions individuals can take to safeguard their health. Here's a snapshot of some of our awareness campaigns:

Reliever Inhaler Overuse (Break Overreliance):

Throughout the world, using a reliever inhaler (SABA) to combat asthma symptoms is the norm. However, using a reliever inhaler two or more times a week (excluding before exercise) is a sign of uncontrolled asthma. Our Break Overreliance campaign, engaged the public in questioning their understanding of asthma medications and urged them to reconsider their reliance on reliever inhalers.

September Asthma Peak:

Each year, there's a surge in asthma-related hospital visits among children, known as the "September Asthma Peak." This phenomenon arises from various factors, such as respiratory illnesses, classroom triggers, and asthma mismanagement coinciding with the return to school. Our September Asthma Peak campaign increased awareness of this seasonal spike, common triggers during this period, and provided guidance on effective asthma management in children.

Breathe Well in Winter:

Winter poses significant challenges for individuals with asthma due to abundant triggers like cold air and triggers found in the home. Our Breathe Well in Winter campaign raises awareness of these risks and provides helpful tips for managing asthma in the colder months. Additionally, it encourages people with asthma and respiratory conditions to get certain vaccinations that can help protect them from further respiratory illnesses.

Severe Asthma (Red Flags):

For the approximately 465,000 individuals in Canada living with severe asthma, effectively managing their condition proves to be exceedingly challenging, affecting their professional, academic, social, and familial lives. Through our Red Flags campaign, we urged individuals to recognize the signs of uncontrolled severe asthma, emphasizing that with improved treatment, their quality of life can significantly improve.





The Devastating Effects of Wildfires in 2023

When reflecting on the Summer of 2023, many individuals with asthma recall experiencing breathing difficulties and enduring a time of extreme anxiety and concern. The unparalleled wildfires that swept across Canada emitted harmful smoke on an unprecedented scale, exacerbating respiratory issues for many, particularly those living with asthma.

Throughout this crisis, we stood firmly by our community, providing essential information and resources to help them effectively manage their asthma. We maintained regular communication

with them regarding wildfires through our social media channels, newsletters, website, and our HelpLine, which experienced a significant increase in usage during this period.

In collaboration with journalists and reporters across Canada, we endeavored to ensure that individuals with asthma were fully informed about the hazards posed by wildfire smoke. We regularly engaged in media appearances to further raise awareness and to provide people with asthma with steps they could follow to help keep them safe.



The London Free Press

A skyful of wildfire smoke. A spike in calls to Canada's asthma helpline

Carter's Story



Tragically, the impact of the wildfire smoke claimed the lives of individuals living with asthma. Among them was Carter Vigh, a nine-year-old from British Columbia, whose asthma attack, triggered by wildfire smoke, resulted in his untimely death.

"Carter was incredible. He was the happiest kid you'd ever meet. Living with severe asthma meant that Carter was no stranger to hospital visits; however, in general, we had his asthma well controlled. Everywhere Carter went, he carried his brief-kit, a lunchbox containing his medications and devices, which served as a constant reminder to everyone in our community of Carter's condition."

"Nothing could have prepared us for the day when Carter took his final breath. I'm pleading with everyone affected by asthma across Canada to take every precaution to ensure your asthma is well-managed during this time of year. I cannot bear the thought of another family experiencing the heartbreak that mine did less than a year ago." - Amber Vigh, Carter's Mother.



Research

Asthma Canada supports and funds asthma research to help unlock new treatments and someday, a cure for asthma.

Canadian Delphi Consensus Study on Severe Asthma Treatment

Throughout 2022/2023, we collaborated with over 150 certified respiratory educators, respirologists, allergists, general practitioners/family physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists nationwide on an expert steering committee. Our goal was to establish the first Canadian stakeholder consensus for the diagnosis, appropriate referral, and treatment of severe asthma.

On World Asthma Day 2023, we unveiled the outcomes and recommendations of this groundbreaking Canadian [Delphi consensus study](#). These findings offer policymakers and healthcare professionals a blueprint and best practices to enhance the quality of care, resulting in improved outcomes, quality of life, and patient experience for Canadians with severe asthma and their caregivers.

Key recommendations include:

- 1** Addressing gaps in timely and accurate referrals to specialists, aligning with the optimal 4–8-week period for asthma patients.
- 2** Exploring an expanded role for pharmacists in identifying asthma patients overly reliant on SABA inhalers, indicating uncontrolled asthma.
- 3** Investigating an expanded role for allied healthcare professionals, such as certified respiratory educators, to bolster the care system.



About the study:

In 2022, a national steering group of asthma experts convened to systematically identify key topics in Canada's severe asthma care pathway. They generated 43 consensus statements, which were transformed into a Likert questionnaire. This questionnaire was distributed to various healthcare providers, including pulmonologists, allergists, family doctors, nurses, pharmacists, certified

respiratory educators, and respiratory therapists. Respondents rated their agreement with each statement on a 4-point scale. The completed questionnaires were analyzed using Delphi methodology, with consensus defined as agreement of 75% or higher. Consensus levels were categorized as 'high' at $\geq 75\%$ and 'very high' at $\geq 90\%$.



Graduate Student Research Grants

Throughout 2022/2023 we partnered with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Institute of Circulatory and Respiratory Health (CIHR-ICRH) and the Canadian Allergy, Asthma and Immunology Foundation (CAAIF) to award 8 research grants totalling \$165,000 to MSc and PhD students who are developing innovative treatments for controlling asthma, as well as an eventual cure.



Awardee Spotlight: **Courtney Hoskinson**

Courtney Hoskinson, a PhD student at the University of British Columbia, is studying how biomes (bacteria) in our gut influence the development of asthma and other allergic diseases. She's thrilled about the chance to conduct this research, believing it could lead to new ways of predicting and preventing asthma and other allergies.

"I am very excited about the prospect of helping people avoid asthma and making new discoveries in the growing field of the gut microbiome."

Early Career Researcher Award in Asthma

The Early Career Researcher Award in Asthma supports Canadian researchers in the early stages of their independent career, fostering basic, clinical, health services, and/or population health research in asthma. Jointly funded by Asthma Canada, AstraZeneca Canada, CAAIF, CIHR-ICRH, and the Canadian Lung Association. For the 2022/2023 year, the award was granted to two recipients: Dr. Cristina Longo from Université de Montréal and Dr. Zihang Lu from Queen's University.

Awardee Spotlight: **Dr. Cristina Longo**

Dr. Longo's project, **"Treating Asthma by Integrating Learning Algorithms with Omics Research: Moving toward Automated High-Dimensional Endotyping in Children (TAILOR-MADE),"** has been making advancements throughout 2023.

The project aims to advance asthma treatment in children by understanding it as a collection of different diseases. The project collects biological samples from children with asthma symptoms to identify biomarkers using advanced technologies. Machine learning algorithms analyze the data to discover crucial biomarkers, ultimately predicting treatment responses and informing the development of new medicines.





Advocacy

Asthma Canada works to support advocacy and public policy change, which helps protect the health, safety and well-being of those with asthma and respiratory allergies.

Delphi Consensus Study: Advocating for Severe Asthma Patients

Throughout 2023, our primary advocacy focus was on presenting the findings of the Delphi Consensus Study to policymakers, aiming to provide actionable insights for enhancing the quality of care for Canadians with severe asthma and their caregivers (see page 13 for more information on this study).

This effort included advocating for recommendations to address gaps and issues in respiratory healthcare, such as:

- 1 Collaborating with respiratory therapists and certified respiratory educators to support patients in primary care settings, thereby improving disease management and control.
- 2 Proactively identifying uncontrolled asthma to prevent emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and avoidable deaths.
- 3 Establishing a referral pathway with clear criteria and acceptable wait times to reduce reliance on emergency rooms.



A Path to High-Quality Respiratory Care for Canadians Living with Asthma



On **World Asthma Day** in May, we released a statement to policymakers, supported by the Delphi Consensus Working Group, outlining the report and key recommendations. These recommendations were also highlighted in our World Asthma Day press release to expand their reach.

In October, we partnered with Longwoods, a healthcare and research publisher, to host a panel discussion titled "[A Path to High-Quality Respiratory Care for Canadians Living with Asthma](#)." Moderated by Carly Weeks, a health reporter from Globe and Mail, the panel included healthcare professionals, policymakers, patients and other stakeholders, discussing strategies to improve respiratory care nationwide.

Moreover, throughout 2023, we actively participated in numerous meetings aimed at addressing the challenges encountered by individuals living with severe asthma. Our commitment remains steadfast in advocating for the approximately 465,000 people living with severe asthma in Canada.



At Asthma Canada, we recognize the strength that comes from unity, which is why we've partnered with several like-minded coalitions to amplify our advocacy efforts. Our coalitions include:



Lung Vaccination Working Group

As we mark the fifth year since the establishment of the Lung Vaccination Working Group (LVWG), a coalition of which we are a founding member, our commitment to raising awareness about the importance of vaccinations for Canadians with respiratory illnesses remains unwavering.

In 2023, we joined forces with the nine other patient and professional groups within the LVWG to amplify the message: vaccinations are safe, effective, and crucial for protecting both individuals and their communities.

During the cold and flu season a bilingual social media campaign was launched to encourage members to share resources that emphasized this vital message.



Green Ribbon Panel

The health of our planet is important to us all. Climate change affects everyone in Canada, but those already experiencing health inequities are disproportionately impacted.

We are committed to providing leadership, advocacy, public awareness information and innovation in the areas of condition, allergies, respiratory health, and the environment.

It is for this reason, we are part of the Green Ribbon Panel, a coalition comprising of environmental and economic leaders nationwide dedicated to exploring the role of nuclear energy and other sectors in combatting climate change while fostering economic growth.



National Lung Health Alliance

In 2023, we were delighted to join the National Lung Health Alliance, a coalition of like-minded organizations, united by a common purpose—to champion vital issues in lung health and drive positive change. Within this coalition, we have diligently advocated for the representation of the 4,600,000+ people in Canada living with asthma in determining the alliance's priorities.

As members of the Alliance, we attended a meeting at Parliament Hill in October 2023, calling on the government to prioritize the long-neglected issue of lung health, which has suffered from chronic underfunding and insufficient attention.

Standing Strong Together



Living with asthma can feel isolating. When people do not understand your symptoms, you can be left feeling alone. It can feel frustrating. Not having the answers to your questions and feeling like you cannot participate in 'normal' everyday activities. It can feel hopeless. Not having a cure to a chronic illness that impacts your everyday.

The Asthma Canada team understands all these feelings and is dedicated to continuing to support this community.

In 2023 we made ways in all three of our strategic focuses:

- Increased Asthma Canada awareness, education and health promotion.
- Developed responsive advocacy strategies.
- Expanded asthma-related research and research opportunities.

At the end of 2023, Asthma Canada was able to secure gifts and support from 3,500 individual donors and 29 sponsors.

On behalf of everyone here at Asthma Canada and the entire community we support, we cannot thank you enough for your contributions last year.

Asthma Canada will continue our mission to help Canadians with asthma lead healthy lives through education, advocacy, and research. With the support of our generous donors and sponsors we are hopeful that we will one day reach our vision of a future without asthma.

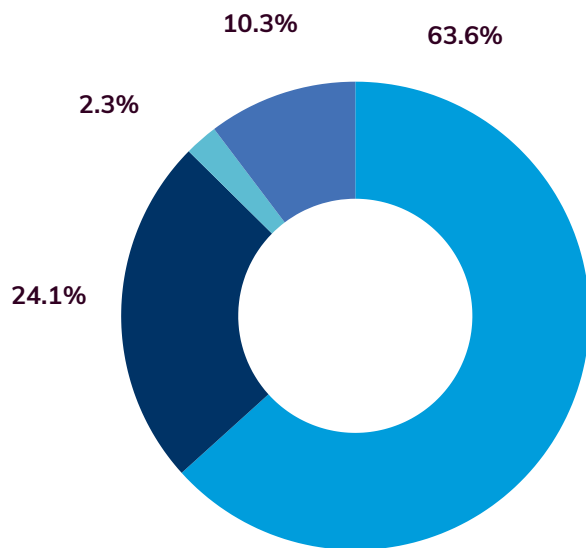


Megan Leigh
Director of Development
Asthma Canada

2023 Financial Highlights



Sources of Revenue



Corporate & Foundation Giving: \$772,651

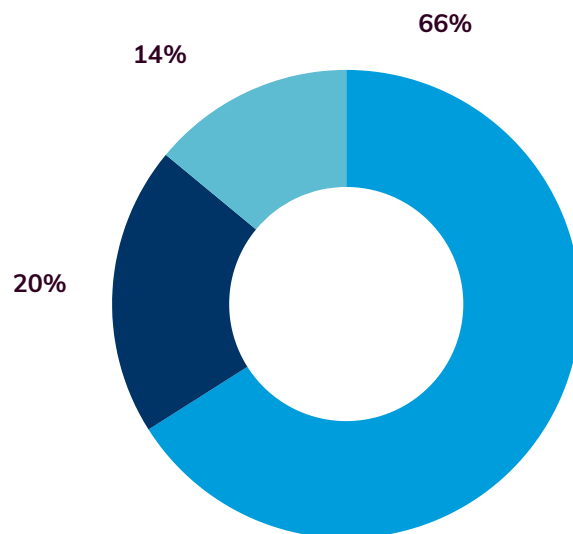
Giving & Bequests: \$294,381

Investment & Other: \$125,809

Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certification Program: \$27,458

Total Revenue: \$1,220,299

Expenses



Mission Delivery: \$673,272

Fundraising: \$203,086

Operations/Administration: \$150,385

Total Expenses: \$1,026,743



Personnel

Board of Directors

Vibhas Bapat
Chair

Kristi MacKenzie
Vice Chair

Karen Slezak
Treasurer

Dr. Susan Waserman
Chair, Medical & Advisory
Committee

Firdos Somji
Secretary, Chair of
Governance and
Nominating Committee

Dag Enhorning
Director

John Healy
Chair Emeritus

Medical & Scientific Advisory Committee

Susan Waserman
MSc, MD, FRCPC
Chair (Ontario)

Susan Balkovec
RRT, CAE
Member (Ontario)

Chris Carlsten
MD, MPH
Member (British Columbia)

Matthew Feldman
MD
Member (Ontario)

Alan Kaplan
MD, CCFP(EM), FCPSC
Member (Ontario)

Stacey McNeilly
RRT, CRE, CTE
Member (British Columbia)

Andrew O'Keefe
MD, FRCPC
Member (Newfoundland)

Ron Olivenstein
MD, Pulmonologist
Member (Quebec)

Cheryl Sadowski
B.Sc, Pharm.D., FCSHP
Member (Alberta)

Padmaja Subbarao
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Member (Ontario)

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Zhen Liu
Director, Administration
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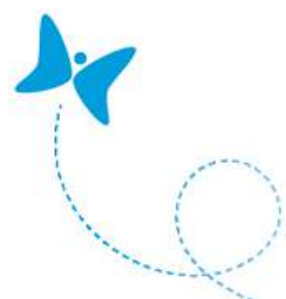
Kristin Valois
Manager,
Communications

Sylvia Grutzmacher
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British Columbia

Susan Haskell
RRT, CRE, CTE, FCSRT
Newfoundland

Tracy Cushing
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