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BETTER NUTRITION FOR BETTER HEALTH

**THE NUTRITION PROGRAM AT THE
MUHC BREAST CLINIC**

April 2020

THE GIFT OF BETTER HEALTH

In 2018, CURE Foundation made a generous donation to support the Nutrition Program at the Breast Clinic at the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC). The donation enabled the Breast Clinic to hire two dietitians, who provide specialized nutritional and dietetics advice to breast cancer patients and survivors to ensure their wellbeing. We are pleased to present the impact of this gift on the many women who undergo breast cancer treatment at the MUHC.



MUHC Breast Clinic Director Dr. Sarkis Meterissian and an MUHC volunteer greet Heidi, a certified therapy dog who provides comfort to women in the Breast Clinic waiting room every Friday.

THE BREAST CLINIC AT THE MUHC

The Breast Clinic at the MUHC is a major regional and supra-regional referral centre for patients diagnosed with breast disease. More than 15,000 women pass through the doors of the Breast Clinic annually. As a university health centre, it participates in the critical multi-centric clinical research trials that shape the future of breast cancer care, delivers state-of-the-art treatments to patients and educates future health care professionals.

NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR BREAST CANCER PATIENTS & SURVIVORS

The Breast Clinic at the MUHC created the Nutrition Program to offer breast cancer patients and survivors three free, personalized sessions with a nutritionist. These sessions help dispel food myths related to cancer, teach patients undergoing active chemotherapy to manage their symptoms, promote a healthy diet, introduce patients to risk factors related to nutrition and healthy living, and provide strategies to accomplish balanced meals individualized to each patient's culture or situation. This invaluable program provides patients with the advice and tools they need to maintain healthy lifestyles during and after cancer treatment.

The Nutrition Program, which is part of the Breast Clinic's Survivorship Program, is coordinated by Sophie Blondin, Patient Care Coordinator. Sophie ensures that the women who visit the MUHC Breast Clinic have access to wellness resources throughout their cancer care.

SOPHIE BLONDIN, PATIENT SUPPORT COORDINATOR



Sophie was a teacher for 20 years until, after completing a Masters of Education on the concept of empathy, she became a certified coach. For the past 12 years, she has held a variety of roles with various cancer organizations, including the Canadian Cancer Society, Palliative Care of Greater Montreal, the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada and Hope & Cope, and was Executive Director at *Regroupement provincial des organismes et groupe d'entraide communautaire en oncologie*. She hosted the first two annual forums of the Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation and has facilitated many oncology meetings. Sophie feels "privileged to support the patients through their cancer journey" as Patient Support Coordinator. Her Bernese mountain dog, Heidi (pictured above), is an MUHC certified therapy dog, and accompanies Sophie to work on Fridays to help patients in the waiting room cope with anxiety.

NUTRITION PROGRAM TEAM

YAMILETH MARCANO, CLINICAL DIETITIAN



Yamileth obtained a bachelor's degree in dietetics and a professional Masters in Clinical Nutrition in her home country of Venezuela. Leaving a country in crisis, she came to Canada in 2012 to pursue a better life and do the thing she loves most: working as a clinical dietitian. She works as a clinical dietitian specializing in oncology at both the Breast Clinic at the MUHC and the Jewish General Hospital. She also has a private practice. Yamileth volunteers with Hope & Cope, an organization that helps people cope with cancer, where she offers group nutrition sessions.

“Breast cancer patients put their trust and lives into someone else’s hands. Proper nutrition has an impact on their recovery, strength and risk of disease recurrence; therefore, it may improve their overall quality of life. By giving them access to the nutrition services, the CURE Foundation is gifting these patients with the possibility to take back some control and participate in their treatment and wellness.”

ROBIN GLANCE, REGISTERED DIETITIAN



Robin Glance is a registered dietitian with over 12 years of clinical experience. Robin began her career at the MUHC where she spent several years as an oncology dietitian. She currently has a private practice in the West Island where she works with clients of all ages to help improve both food habits and relationships with food. Robin takes a non-diet approach to counseling and does not believe in strict rules or deprivation. She continues her connection to the oncology world by volunteering monthly at the West Island Cancer Wellness Centre. She has appeared on Global, Breakfast Television, CJAD and CBC Radio as a nutritional expert.

“Feeding your body well is a great way to help manage treatments, heal and keep up the immune system. It can, however, be difficult and overwhelming to know what to believe when it comes to knowing what to eat. The side-effects of different treatments, as well as the stress of dealing with a cancer diagnosis, can have a big impact on appetite and digestion. I aim to

provide not only evidence-based, but compassionate support and information. I am so honored to be part of this incredible initiative of supporting women through this tumultuous time in their lives.”

IMPACT

Patients are introduced to the Nutrition Program through regular educational sessions for newly diagnosed breast cancer patients. These sessions are run by Sophie and attended by either Yamileth or Robin, who provide an overview of nutrition services. Patients then have the option to access between one and three free, personalized nutrition sessions. Following the sessions, each patient is asked to evaluate their experience. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and most patients say that the sessions helped them and that they would recommend the service to others.

PATIENT TESTIMONIALS

Below are testimonials written by breast cancer patients and survivors who have accessed the Breast Clinic’s Nutrition Program.

“Meeting with Yamileth was one of the first services I used after receiving my cancer diagnosis. She recognized immediately how anxious I was about the connection between food and the disease and spent a lot of time with me answering all my questions. After our meeting was over, I thought of more questions to ask her and she answered my (many!) emails promptly and thoroughly. She was patient and assiduous and provided relevant and understandable explanations. **Her knowledge and expertise were invaluable to me at a time when I felt overwhelmed, confused and frightened.** I greatly appreciate having had access to a professional nutritionist to put my mind at ease and help me make sound decisions on such an important part of my healing and recovery.”

« Disponible en tout temps. Discours rassurant et non culpabilisant. Réponds avec rapidité aux courriels. Une perle! **Je n'aurais pu demander un meilleur service.** Un énorme Merci Robin! »

“I had the pleasure of meeting Robin Glance for one session. She was able to answer all my questions and confirmed to me that I was already on a good nutrition path. She was able to tweak my meal plan. She is knowledgeable, took time to listen to my concerns and responded clearly. **I highly recommend that patients meet her, even for just one consultation, to assure they are on the right path, especially during such a life changing time.**”

“I was delighted to have this wonderful service offered to me. Until I met the nutritionist, Yamileth, I had no idea that there might be specific nutritional guidelines to follow during radiation. I thought that this was a highly valuable experience, one that I would never have considered seeking out had it not been offered. **Thank you to the generous donor who provided it.**”

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As the Nutrition Program grows, Sophie, Yamileth and Robin have plans to expand the offerings of the program, including:

- **Nutrition conferences** for breast cancer patients and survivors on various topics, such as how one's diet should change when undergoing cancer treatment or after going into remission.
- **Cooking classes** for cancer patients and survivors to teach them how to make healthy meals that comply with their dietary needs.
- A regular **newsletter** that covers diet and nutrition-related topics, answers frequently asked questions, and provides resources.
- The chance to **widen the Nutrition Program** so that all cancer patients can access this valuable resource.

THANK YOU

Your gift ensures that the many women who are diagnosed and treated for breast cancer every year have access to services that treat not only the cancer, but the whole person. By improving access to wellness services like the Nutrition Program, CURE Foundation is giving cancer patients and survivors a better chance at living long, full and happy lives after cancer.

The success of the Nutrition Program at the Breast Clinic would not have been possible without CURE Foundation's leading support. We are grateful for your generosity, and look forward to reporting further successes and expansions of the program in the coming years. Thank you.

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– Breast Cancer Survivor, written on a Nutrition Program evaluation form
