

Defying “The Usual”, Thanks to a Clinical Trial

When Elaine Cawadias found out she had ovarian cancer, she experienced a rather unexpected emotion: relief.

Her symptoms had started only one month after her final appointment with her oncologist, where she received one last “all clear.” Elaine was a breast cancer survivor, and had been in remission for nearly 7 years.



“At that time, there were really no treatments for recurrent triple negative breast cancer. Women were only surviving about six months,” Elaine says. “When I started having new symptoms, we were afraid the breast cancer was back. That was the point where my husband and I started doing things like sharing our passwords.”

Elaine knew the prognosis for ovarian cancer could also be poor and that recurrences were common, but she still felt she had a chance. “I was diagnosed at stage 3, but I had hope in the idea of fighting a different type of cancer where I could try new treatments.”

Elaine underwent surgery and chemotherapy, keeping her positive attitude even when the ovarian cancer reoccurred just over a year later. She completed her next rounds of chemo while continuing to work, even taking family trips between treatments to China and Peru. When another reoccurrence came 8 months after that, she finished chemo again and asked her doctor if she might be a good fit for a clinical trial.

His response? “I was actually just about to suggest that myself.”

Elaine knew about trials through her work with patients who have ALS at the Ottawa Hospital Rehabilitation Centre. She understood she might not receive a ‘miracle cure,’ but that it was worth a try. When her

condition didn’t improve during her first 6 months on the trial, her doctors discovered she was in the placebo group and switched her to another arm of the trial to receive the active treatment, a PARP inhibitor called Rucaparib.

Then, the results came quickly. “I’m hesitant to say I’m in remission or I’m cured, because you never really know,” Elaine says. “But my CT scans are completely clear, and my blood work is well under control.”

And it’s been like this for over two years.

Apart from feeling a little tired and sensitive to the sun, Elaine doesn’t experience any side effects. Her hair has grown back since her chemotherapy days, and she’s thankful to be free from the debilitating fatigue.

“Life is pretty great right now,” she says.

While Elaine does sometimes find herself wondering how long the treatment will work, she says she feels lucky. Even through all the recurrences and uncertainty, she has never lost her positive spirit, explaining it gives her a sense of normalcy when life is anything but.

In fact, Elaine remembers one doctor’s visit where a medical resident observing the appointment was shocked to hear she had kept traveling and working out with her personal trainer, even during chemotherapy.

Her doctor simply replied, “This is not your usual patient.”

“After the first year, I was amazed my scans still looked so good. Then we got through year two... it’s just incredible.”

WHAT IS A PARP INHIBITOR?

A PARP inhibitor is a targeted therapy, which blocks a particular enzyme in cells called PARP. PARP serves many different purposes in the body, primarily to help repair damaged DNA. Blocking a particular enzyme can help keep cancer cells from repairing their own DNA, which causes them to die. PARP inhibitors have been effective in clinical trials for certain patients with ovarian cancer, but do not necessarily depend upon genes – researchers are still trying to discover why some patients respond to the treatment and some do not.

Your Gift At Work In Ottawa's West End



Cancer Coach Patti has been helping clients and their caregivers every Friday at Beyond Yoga in Kanata.

It's incredible what generous and visionary donors like YOU can accomplish.

With your help, since the spring of 2017 we've been able to offer more support that's closer to home for families living in the west end.

What started off as a pilot project has been so successful that it's been extended indefinitely.

If it weren't for you, Patti wouldn't be available to the 41 families in the west end who came to her for ongoing support through Cancer Coaching. These families live as far as Perth, and were in no position to access our services at the Maplesoft Center on Alta Vista Drive.

But because of you, people like Mark Lawrenson have been able to benefit from an incredible resource to help them meet the challenges of cancer.

Mark and his wife Mary live west of Ottawa in Perth. In April of 2016, Mary was diagnosed with breast cancer, which has since metastasized to her jaw bone. Thanks to you, Mark found the support he needed as Mary's caregiver through Cancer Coaching at our Beyond Yoga location in Kanata.

Read Mark's story in his own words on the next page.

You Can Help Cancer Coaching Take Root Across the Region

When Serge Lavictoire was diagnosed with cancer several years ago, he found it difficult to share certain parts of his experience with his family and friends.

"I didn't talk about this, about how I felt, with my brother. I didn't want to tell him about the little things." He says. "Same thing with my wife. I didn't want to show her everything, because I wanted her to keep her spirits for the kids."

Communication would end up being one of Serge's greatest challenges, and there was a lot on his mind, particularly once his treatments were finished. "I was extremely scared to get sick again. You have so many fears, and that's when support is very important, not only during, but after, to give you the correct tools to get through cancer."

Now that his own cancer journey is in the past, he wants to make sure those tools are always there for anyone who needs them. Cancer Coaching was not available back when he would have needed it, so Serge is now doing everything he can to make sure his friends and neighbours make the most of the service.



Serge Lavictoire with his wife Nadine

"We believe in this," says Serge. "Let's be honest: everyone is touched by cancer. For me, it was pretty clear: the need is there."

Cancer Coaching was recently brought into Serge's hometown of Clarence-Rockland, spurred through by demand in the community and support from donors like you. And while Serge is glad for the addition, he's still recruiting support for it, knowing it must be ongoing for the community to really benefit.

"We have to make sure that it won't be a one-year service," he says. "It needs to be a multi-year service to really offer the care that this community needs."

Through donating part of the proceeds of a yearly community hockey tournament to the Cancer Foundation, Serge and Luc are leading the way in making this happen. You can be part of this movement today by adding your own gift in support of Cancer Coaching, ensuring Cancer Coaching remains available in both French and English in Clarence-Rockland and surrounding communities now and in the future.

How Coaching Brought Us Together: Mark's Story



When Mary was diagnosed with breast cancer, our day-to-day life was turned upside down, what with surgeries, radiation treatments, and doctor's appointments.

I became withdrawn because I didn't know what to expect. Watching Mary go through this gave me a lot of uncertainty in our lives as parents, as a couple, and because we simply don't know what the future holds.

Mary and I have five children between us, so we're a blended family. Talking to my own children about their stepmother's cancer wasn't an issue, but talking to my wife's children about it was difficult.

I needed somebody who could help me better support Mary and our family.

Cancer Coaching with Patti has helped me to cope better with my situation.

I've learned to take life one day at a time. Coaching also taught me the importance of taking care of myself so I don't burn out. It's impossible to take care of your loved one if you don't take care of yourself, too.

My experience with Cancer Coaching also gave me the ability to reach out to my step children in a way I

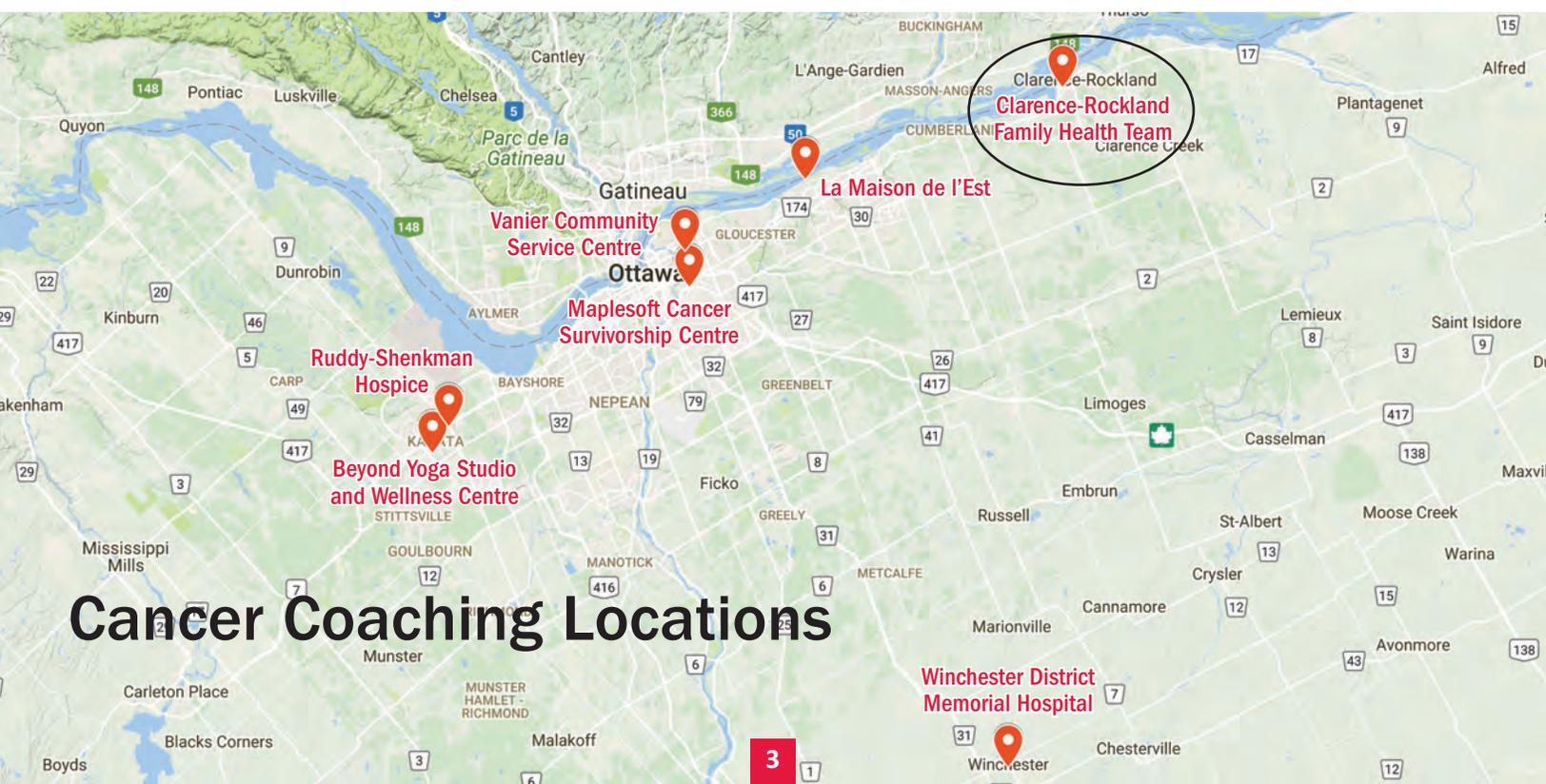
never imagined possible. The encouragement I received from Patti allowed me to talk and deal with them on a new level. They now feel they have someone else to reach out to during this difficult time, and we've drawn closer as a family because of it.

All my focus now is on being there for my wife and knowing when and what to do for myself, to ensure I will be there for her when she needs me most. But it always feels like there's never enough time, especially when you're driving into Ottawa almost every day for medical appointments. I want to spend as much time with Mary doing the things we love, not driving half-way across the region through all types of weather and traffic.

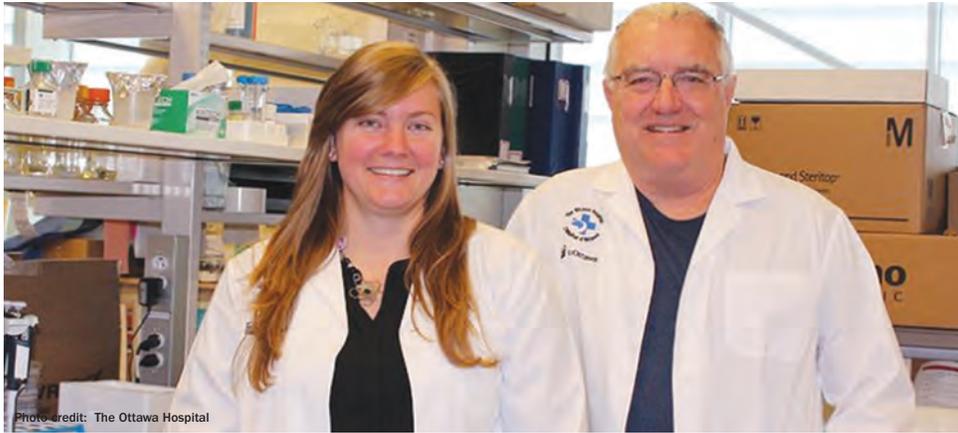
Because of you, I was able to access Cancer Coaching in Kanata from our home in Perth. Now I have more time to spend with Mary doing what brings us joy: being with our loved ones, travelling, and even putting around the house, quiet, happy, and together.

Thank you for seeing the need for Cancer Coaching in the west end, and thank you for contributing towards filling that need! It means so much to me, Mary, and our family.

“I needed someone to talk to, someone professionally trained and who could help me not only understand what my wife must be feeling but how to cope with my own feelings of desperation.”



Combined Immunotherapies: The Path to a Cure



When Dr. John Bell and Dr. Marie-Claude Bourgeois-Daigneault of The Ottawa Hospital and the University of Ottawa recently tested a cure for triple negative breast cancer in mice, they discovered a strategy that could be effective in treating many different types of cancer in the future.

It involves combined immunotherapies, a type of treatment where more than one immunotherapeutic approach is used simultaneously to help a patient's immune system fight their cancer.

Immunotherapies have dominated the world of cancer research in recent years, and have shown promising results worldwide. Since many cancers or cancer reoccurrences do not respond well to standard treatments, patients are in desperate need of more options and better outcomes. Many have found new hope through

immunotherapies, and recent studies have spurred researchers to wonder if different immunotherapy approaches might be even more powerful when used together.

This is what Dr. Bell and Dr. Bourgeois-Daigneault set out to discover as they examined the effects of treating cancer using the Maraba virus, an oncolytic virus manufactured at The Ottawa Hospital, in combination with a checkpoint inhibitor drug. A checkpoint inhibitor helps a patient's immune system to see through the defenses cancer cells use to avoid detection, to help the immune system identify and destroy tumours. But what makes the combination approach so successful? Once the checkpoint inhibitor assists this process, an additional immunotherapy like a vaccine or a virus can be introduced to the body to kill even more of the cancer cells.

When the study concluded, up to 90% of the mouse models were completely cured of the disease, showing that the two immunotherapy treatments were indeed more effective when used in combination than if they had been used alone!

While this is an amazing discovery on its own, it truly shows another incredible accomplishment: how much of an impact you have on this community when you support local cancer care. You help world-class discoveries to happen right here in our community, which means local patients can be some of the first to benefit from good results. When studies like this show promise in the lab, they can be explored further and possibly one day developed into local clinical trials. Local researchers are far from finished in exploring the effects of combined immunotherapies, and your support provides them with the resources and funding they need to reach the next big breakthrough.



Currently 30,000 people in our community are undergoing cancer treatment. On May 9th community leaders, doctors, researchers, and scientists from across the region will gather together to raise funds for Cancer Coaching, local life-saving clinical trials and research. Find out more at <http://www.ottawacancer.ca/2018breakfast>

Get Involved in our Upcoming Events



Ottawa Race Weekend
2018
May 26-27



Big Rig Brewery Presents
HOPE Volleyball SummerFest
July 14



Be a Cancer Champion -
Host your own fundraiser!
January 1 - December 31

Learn more at ottawacancer.ca/events