

MS PROGRESS REPORT

A Mentor and Friend: Theresa and Donalda's Inspiring Story

After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 2009, Donalda couldn't seem to find hope in her new life with the disease. *"I hid for two years,"* Donalda recalls. Little did she know, one MS Canada volunteer would change everything for her.

Theresa, who was diagnosed with MS 21 years prior, met Donalda at a health fair in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. **As an MS peer support group volunteer for MS Canada since 1995, Theresa was eager to meet others with MS and help positively impact their lives in any way she could.**

When she realized Donalda needed some encouragement, Theresa didn't think twice before stepping in with compassion, understanding, and a warm embrace. *"Donalda and I chatted for a bit,"* Theresa explains. *"Then we hugged!"*

A new sense of hope washed over Donalda in that moment. *"I instantly felt a shift in my resolve, and*

"I realized I couldn't live with the dark attitude I had about MS, she says."

"In that hug was hope, kindness, and support."

Over the years, the two fostered an unbreakable friendship. *"Theresa has been a great mentor, friend, and teacher. I go to her for everything,"* Donalda explains. *"We had that initial meeting that did change my life — but it didn't stop there. **That's the power of being a good volunteer.**"*

Inspired by Theresa's selflessness and commitment to helping others, Donalda became an MS peer support



Donalda and Theresa are still good friends today

group volunteer herself in 2012. *"There's such an enrichment you get from volunteering,"* Donalda says. *"I do it because I know how lonely it was for me, and I wouldn't wish that on anyone."* Both women are still passionately leading their support groups and changing lives every day.

As they help others living with MS, Theresa and Donalda are hopeful for a world without this disease — and they know the critical role donors play in helping make that a reality. Theresa says she would like donors to know that they are making an incredible difference. *"Donors allow us to improve our quality of life, provide programs and services, and fund research,"* she says. **"Because of our supporters, we are the organization that we are today."**

On behalf of Theresa, Donalda and the countless other MS Canada volunteers who help make the world a better place for the MS community, thank you for sharing in our commitment to the cause. Your support gives so many people across Canada help and hope in their MS journeys.

A message from the President

This year, we have seen incredible research projects led by some of the best and brightest researchers Canada has to offer. With these research projects at the forefront, our goal remains the same — to provide accessible and trusted support to Canadians facing this disease as we work to end MS. I deeply appreciate your generosity in making our mission possible.

Canada is a leading force when it comes to MS research in the world — and we are strong because of *people like you*. Together, I know we will continue to bring hope and strength to those facing MS and their loved ones.

In this issue of your **MS Progress Report**, you'll learn how researchers like Dr. Tremlett, Dr. Ousman, and Dr. Liu are pursuing unique MS research projects as they uncover critical knowledge about the disease— bringing us closer to ending MS. As you read, I know you'll be encouraged by their progress. You'll also read about Theresa and Donald's heartwarming journey from strangers, to MS peer support group leaders, to lifelong friends.

We have already made so much headway in the fight to end MS, but our work is far from over. With Canada having one of the highest rates of MS in the world, it is crucial that we come together and maintain our progress for those facing this disease in Canada and beyond. **With extraordinary partnerships like yours, the progress we are making won't stop.** Thank you so much for your kindness.

Sincerely,



Dr. Pamela Valentine
President and Chief
Executive Officer
MS Canada



KNOW THE FACTS. HELP THE FIGHT.

MS threatens our family members,
friends, and neighbours:



Canada has one of the
highest rates of MS
in the world.

Women are three times
more likely to be diagnosed
with MS than men.



90K

Over **90,000**
Canadians are living
with MS today.

Worldwide, there are
2.9 million people
living with MS.



For the sake of those we love, we must
continue pushing for progress.
Thank you for your support as we help
people with MS live their best lives.

**Thank you for helping us drive cutting-edge
research progress on behalf of every Canadian
living with MS.**

A Breakthrough Protein with Potential Disease Halting Characteristics

In MS, the protective covering of nerve fibers, myelin, can become lost or damaged, resulting in disease worsening. Further research is needed to uncover therapeutic targets that protect or promote the formation of myelin in the central nervous system, which is key to slowing or halting MS disease progression.

Dr. Shalina Ousman, an Associate Professor in the Departments of Clinical Neurosciences and Cell Biology & Anatomy at the University of Calgary, and her team are interested in identifying factors needed for the proper production and maintenance

of myelin. They identified a small protein called CRYAB that is found in higher amounts in the brains of people with MS — however, its function is unknown. In a recent Phase 2 clinical trial, CRYAB was found to be not only safe in people, but remarkably reduced the formation of active lesions in people with relapsing-remitting MS.

The findings from this study will further our understanding of factors needed for remyelination and support the development of new treatments that halt disease progression.

To learn more, visit mscanada.ca/shalinaousman

SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

Dr. Helen Tremlett

Dr. Helen Tremlett is a Professor at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver in the Faculty of Medicine. She heads the Tremlett Lab and the Epidemiology in MS research program with the vision of improving health, treatment options, and outcomes in those with MS.

Along with a team of researchers, Dr. Tremlett has identified an MS prodromal period — a range of non-specific signs or health conditions that occur at least five years before the clinical diagnosis of MS. Recent findings from an MS Canada-funded study led by Dr. Tremlett found that people with MS showed high rates of health service use for mental health conditions as well as gastrointestinal issues in the

five years before an MS diagnosis.

Findings from the study suggest that mental health and gastrointestinal conditions pose a significant burden very early in the MS disease course and may be part of the MS prodrome. Since current health issues associated with the prodrome can be common in the general population, additional studies and markers are required to understand those who are truly at risk of MS.



Dr. Tremlett's work has the potential to change countless lives around the world — and her research has the potential to make MS a thing of the past.

Thank you for helping drive progress through research like this.

To learn more, visit mscanada.ca/helentremlett

“I have been fortunate enough to witness firsthand the monumental, positive impact that MS Canada has had on MS research.”

Innovative Drug Found to Be Effective in Treating Nerve Damage

Dr. Fang Liu, a senior scientist at the Centre for Addictions and Mental Health (CAMH) and her team of researchers have taken a new approach to treating MS. They specifically studied the effects of targeting the glutamate system and developed a new small molecule compound that can reduce MS-like symptoms and repair damaged myelin in pre-clinical models of MS.

Dr. Liu believes that the evidence of efficacy and tolerability of the small molecule compound makes

it a good candidate to be developed for human trials. The next steps in drug development will involve further pre-clinical research, including investigating the safety and stability of the compound.



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250 Dundas Street West, Suite 500
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1-800-361-2985 | mscanada.ca
donorservice@mscanada.ca