

Impact

Newsletter

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VGH
UBC hospital
foundation



Ryan Jones, 25, is healthy and happy again after being the first cardiac arrest patient in Canadian history to receive treatment with the revolutionary “brain bolt” device at VGH.

Wildland firefighter saved by VGH after car crash, heart attack and brain injury

On a Friday morning in May 2016, unseasonal snow was thick on the road as 22 year old Ryan Jones was on his way to fight a forest fire near Fort St. John. Suddenly the wheels got stuck and his car veered into the oncoming lane. He saw a car approaching and tried to turn back, but his car was stuck in the snow — he couldn't turn away.

“I don't remember anything after that,” says Ryan. “I just woke up at the hospital.”

To Ryan, one minute he was driving and the next he was at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH). To his parents Donna and Jim, it felt like a lifetime.

“I remember looking at him and hardly recognizing him,” says Donna. “He was a mess, just full of tubes, and he didn't look like Ryan.”

A Canadian medical first

At VGH, the medical team determined that after his car crashed Ryan's heart stopped for 35 minutes, which caused a traumatic brain injury due to lack of oxygen. He also broke a leg and his left hand. To give Ryan the best chance of recovery, Drs. Myp Sekhon and Don Griesdale had a revolutionary idea. For the first time in Canadian history they would use the “brain bolt” on a cardiac arrest patient.

The brain bolt is a cutting-edge brain monitoring device. By placing specialized catheters into a patient's brain, the medical team receives vital second-to-second information including oxygen levels and blood pressure.

“Immediately after putting in the catheter the team was able to begin healing Ryan's brain,” says Dr. Sekhon.

Over the next five days, the brain bolt provided the critical information needed for the team to adjust Ryan's blood pressure to the optimal levels for his recovery. Six weeks later, he woke up. At first Ryan was unable to speak or walk. He needed the best rehabilitation in the province, so he was referred to GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre — a boot camp for the brain and body.

Back to saving lives

Today, Ryan is happy and determined to return to firefighting. Yet, his story is already saving lives.

Following Ryan's successful outcome, Dr. Sekhon and his associates have continued to study the effects of the brain bolt on cardiac arrest patients and the results are astounding.

“Before Ryan's case we applied a one-size-fits-all approach to regulating blood pressure in cardiac patients. Well, no more,” says Dr. Sekhon. “Personalizing medicine with this technology has the potential to save thousands of lives.”

Dealing with brain injury

- 1 in 3 Canadians are affected by brain disease, traumatic brain injury or nervous system dysfunction.
- The Neurocritical Care Program at VGH is recognized as one of the leading academic programs in the world.
- Approximately 1.5 million people in Canada are living with a brain injury.

Support innovative research and vital medical equipment to help patients like Ryan get expert help when they need it most. Learn more at vghfoundation.ca/brain



Music therapy helps burn victim through treatment

Thanks to the medical expertise at VGH Sammy Badger is happily back to singing with no lasting damage from severe facial burns.

On the first day of Spring Break in 2018, Sammy Badger, 17, was enjoying a bonfire with her friends by the Squamish River.

Then in an instant everything changed. Someone threw an accelerant into the fire. The explosion engulfed Sammy's head and hand in a ball of flame.

"I was on fire and one of the kids across from me basically jumped through the flames towards me and pushed me to the ground and yelled, *Roll, roll!*" says Sammy.

Sammy closed her eyes and mouth and rolled in the sand, putting out the fire.

Sammy couldn't open her eyes and her head was in scorching pain. She needed expert medical care — the kind found only at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH), the major burn referral centre for adults in BC.

Getting the best help

At VGH, the medical team examined Sammy's injuries — she had burns on her face, neck and hand. Thankfully, the burns were considered superficial and did not affect the nerves.

"This is good news, but it also brings a challenge," says Dr. Anthony Papp, Medical Director, BC Professional Firefighters' Burn, Trauma and High Acuity Unit (BTHAU) at VGH. "Good, because we can help her skin fully recover. But the exposed nerve endings can cause a lot of pain."

Part of Sammy's treatment involved "debriding". This is when the burnt skin and foreign objects like dirt are

removed in order for the healthy skin underneath to re-form properly. "It can be very painful, even with pain medication," says Dr. Papp.

Strength through song

Sammy is a musician — a singer. Knowing this, staff members brought in Music Therapist Gemma Isaac (see her Q&A on back cover) to play music with Sammy while the medical team undertook the debriding process.

"I didn't know if I was going to be able to sing again or not," says Sammy. "Then Gemma started singing and I started singing too. It took me away from the pain."

Six weeks after that fateful day, thanks to the world-class care she received at VGH, Sammy's wounds were fully healed. She has since written a song about her experience entitled *Phoenix* under her stage name Valor Grey.

"I am so grateful for the staff and therapists who helped me at VGH," says Sammy. "Because of them I can sing again. I have my face again. And now I want to be a Music Therapist and help other people like me because I understand what they've been through."

Support BC's major burn referral centre at VGH to help patients like Sammy receive the best possible care. Learn more at vghfoundation.ca/community

Flaming facts

- VGH's BC Professional Firefighters' Burn, Trauma and High Acuity Unit (BTHAU) is the provincial referral centre treating major burns for adults.
- Burns cause an estimated 180,000 deaths per year worldwide.
- More than 3,000 Canadians are treated every year for major burns.

Friendship pact supporting vital stroke research

When Rob Macdonald's business partner Bob Glass suffered a serious stroke resulting in his death, Rob and his friend Ray Bergen discussed raising some money in recognition of the good work of Dr. Philip Teal who was the attending neurologist. Rob and Ray talked about this fundraising idea with some friends and raised a total of \$165,000 in memory of Bob Glass.

In later conversations with Dr. Teal they were told about the difficulty of supporting stroke research with the uncertainty of annual fundraising.

Accordingly, in order to provide stroke research with some stable funding for the next five years, Rob and Ray made a plan to donate \$25,000 per year each for five years to support the Vancouver Stroke Program (VSP) at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH).

They then recruited other friends into the fundraising: Don James, Eric Martin, George Wong and John Mackay. The group's generosity directly supports Dr. Thalia Field's stroke research.

Ray and his group of friends gather together once a year to receive an update from Dr. Field on the progress of her research which is focused on reducing first-ever and recurrent stroke, as well as improving the quality of life for patients who have experienced stroke — and those who care for them.



Ray Bergen, Don James, Eric Martin and their expanding network have raised an astonishing \$935,000 (and growing) for stroke research and care in BC.

In addition, her research on risk prediction in stroke-related diseases is developing innovative early therapeutic strategies. Hearing directly about the impact of their donations is meaningful and motivating.

VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation is incredibly thankful to Ray Bergen, Robert Macdonald, John Mackay, Don James, Eric Martin, George Wong and their growing network for their generous contributions totalling almost one million dollars towards vital stroke research and care in BC.

Like Ray and his friends, you can provide funding to vital research to help the stroke patients of today and tomorrow. Learn more at vghfoundation.ca/brain

Helping thousands of British Columbians

Every year, approximately 4,900 British Columbians suffer a stroke. Those who survive often go on to live with devastating consequences including reduction or loss of speech, loss of control over their body, and brain injury. The need for vital research is clear.

Help purchase new equipment

Donations to our *Most Urgent Needs* fund help our health care teams purchase much-needed equipment such as:

Critical care bed
\$14,050

Defibrillator
\$15,800

External pacemaker
\$5,500

Bladder scanner
\$15,200

Wheelchair
\$7,180

Exercise tolerance testing treadmill
\$8,000

To make a donation, contact:
604 875 4676
info@vghfoundation.ca

Give online at:
vghfoundation.ca/donate



Asha and Ravi, Jab Sidhoo's daughter and son, are thrilled to carry on their father's legacy as a force for health care transformation and change in Vancouver.

Music Therapist Gemma Isaac supports burn, trauma and high acuity patients at VGH.

Leaving a legacy, making an impact

Jab Sidhoo was just six years old when he arrived in BC from British-ruled India in 1929.

From an early age Jab witnessed the fight for equal rights. Whether it was his father's struggle for fair and equitable treatment, or watching family friends — a pair of sisters, Sardit and Jagdis Siddoo — become the first Canadian-born doctors of Indian descent. These progressive moments would play an important role in shaping the charitable man Jab would become.

A lion of his community

Jab loved Vancouver: the city and the people. Jab was one of the 100 founding members of the BC Lions, providing funding to help push the team to their elite status today.

"He never missed a game," says Asha, Jab's daughter. "People would phone my mom and ask for invitations to come over and she would say, *I have to check if there's a game on that day.*"

Jab was also a loyal supporter of health care. In 1998, he became a donor to VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation. He also established the Ajaib (Jab) and Nirmal (Munni) Sidhoo Charities Endowment Fund, which provides funding to young researchers at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) and UBC Hospital to study urology and diabetes. And when he passed away, Jab left a generous gift of securities to VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation in his will.

"He would look at money like a pie, and he made sure there was always a piece leftover for people who weren't eating," says Ravi. "That was dad."

We are forever grateful to Jab and the Sidhoo family.

Join donors like Jab by leaving a gift in your will to VGH & UBC Hospital Foundation and help make a difference. Learn more at vghfoundation.ca/legacy

Behind the scenes with Music Therapist Gemma Isaac

Where did you grow up?

I grew up in Burnaby for the first six years of my life then moved to the Marpole neighbourhood and have remained a Vancouver girl ever since.

How long have you worked at VGH?

My music therapy internship started in 2011 and by 2012 I was in a newly created position for music therapy in VGH's BC Professional Firefighters' Burn, Trauma and High Acuity Unit (BTHAU). 2019 marks my eighth year providing music therapy to patients at VGH.

What first interested you in music therapy?

When my mom was going through chemotherapy, I would sit next to her and she would request songs. It was the least I could do for her — after all, she did invest in all my singing, dancing and acting classes! As I sang, I noticed her anxiety would greatly decrease and the music created a shift in the environment. I was curious about the art and science of music, and that's when I discovered the allied health profession of music therapy and that there are both BA and MA degrees offered in Canada. I was really impressed that the profession is evidence-based and that there is so much research into understanding how and why music is so effective.

What do you like most about your job?

That families allow me to become a part of their recovery journey. And that my job can bring a sense of peace, hope and autonomy to patients in some of their most challenging times. It really is an honour to provide the gift of music when recovery can feel so displacing.

See how your support can help innovative therapies and care for patients in need at VGH. Learn more at vghfoundation.ca/community