

Senior Living: Great causes, great women

Life handed this trio lemons, but they made sweet lemonade.

Alice Lukacs, [Postmedia News](#)

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Efforts to find a cure for cancer, and for better treatments in the meantime, continue thanks to medical researchers and the efforts of others. Photo by Sue Reeve

This column came about quite accidentally, as stories of three great ladies and their causes merged into one — a tale of courage and determination in the face of great odds — that is bound to inspire all of us.

CAUSE AND HEROINE No. 1

I found out about Nadia Chaudhri when I read Susan Schwartz's moving article, practically an obituary, in *The Montreal Gazette*. Chaudhri, a neuroscientist working at Concordia University, succumbed to ovarian cancer in the Fall of 2021 at the age 43. A wife and mother, she used her remaining time to communicate on social media, raising awareness of symptoms and early detection of ovarian cancer.

As well, Chaudhri launched a successful fundraising campaign aimed at addressing under-representation of women and minorities in neuroscience. A fighter to the end, she even continued to fundraise while in palliative care at the McGill University Health Centre, walking the hallways. Her efforts earned her legions of followers on social media, to whom she tweeted from her hospital bed, “I have never felt so much love.”

This heroine’s efforts struck a chord with me. Some time ago I, too, had an encounter with tests for ovarian cancer, though with a much happier outcome.

As a result of an examination, I was referred to McGill University Health Centre’s DOvEE (Diagnostic Ovarian and Endometrial Cancer Early) program targeting symptomatic women. While undergoing tests for ovarian cancer which, fortunately, produced negative results, I remember the experience as a satisfying one, because of the kind professionals performing the tests at the centre.

CAUSE AND HEROINE No. 2

Luckily, Sheila Kussner, O.C., O.Q., C.O.M., another remarkable woman, is still around in Montreal, to see the institution she founded 40 years ago function and flourish. Diagnosed at age 14 with an aggressive bone cancer that required the amputation of her left leg above the knee, the experience came to define the rest of her life.

In 1981, it inspired her to establish Hope and Cope, a “one stop shop” operating within Montreal’s Jewish General Hospital. Here, cancer patients and their families can find the support they need through peer counselling and wellness programs offered free of charge.

In 2007, the ambitious project developed into the Hope and Cope Cancer Wellness Centre. Staffed by volunteers and a skilled staff, the centre offers a variety of wellness activities, exercise and rehabilitation programs, as well as support for cancer patients at all stages, with the aim of living well and restoring hope.

Even during the pandemic, services continued, offered online or by phone. Here, thanks to Kussner and her dedicated team, hoping and coping with cancer never stops.

CAUSE AND HEROINE No. 3

This one has a personal aspect, as it concerns a friend of mine, Bev Moir of Toronto. In 2020, after rewarding careers, first in health care, then at Scotia Wealth Management, Moir was ready for a well-earned retirement when she received an unexpected “gut punch.” A never-smoker, she was diagnosed with Stage 4 non-small-cell lung cancer.

Not one to stay inactive for too long, she decided to put her efforts into increasing public awareness, decreasing stigma and funding for lung cancer. Prescribed daily targeted therapy at Toronto’s Sunnybrook Odette Cancer Centre, Moir is now medically stable and enjoying life.

In September 2021, in line with her aim of becoming a lung cancer advocate, Moir organized a fundraising golf tournament in support of Sunnybrook Lung Cancer. True to her Crush It With Bev motto, the successful event reached its fundraising goal of \$150,000 which will be used to purchase diagnostic equipment giving valuable findings for rapid lung cancer testing.

Way to go, Bev!

Life handed each of these three women a “lemon” that they turned into sweet-tasting lemonade, prepared with love. They have earned our gratitude and that of generations to come.

Alice Lukacs writes the Life in the 90s column