MONTRÉAL SACRÉ-CŒUR HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

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Preparing for the next 100 years

Research to improve care and bring hope

Dr. Jean-Marc Mac-Thiong, spine surgeon and researcher, with one of his patients, **Mr. Jean-Marc Giroux**.

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Research to improve care and bring hope

Interview with Dr. Jean-Marc Mac-Thiong and Mr. Jean-Marc Giroux, patient

Despite a serious accident that left him with limited mobility, Jean-Marc Giroux has reason to be optimistic about his chances of walking again one day. Thanks to the experts at Montréal Sacré-Cœur Hospital's Integrated Trauma Centre, particularly the research led by Dr. Jean-Marc Mac-Thiong's team, Mr. Giroux has regained some independence just months after a serious fall on June 12. He is even considering a gradual return to his work as a lawyer.

A major teaching hospital, Sacré-Cœur combines exceptional intensive care, decades of expertise, research-driven innovation and cutting-edge equipment to deliver advanced trauma care. Future advances in trauma care could save even more lives and help more people regain their independence.

Q: Tell us what brought you to Montréal Sacré-Cœur Hospital.

Jean-Marc Giroux: A tree in my yard had two branches that had become a safety hazard, so I decided to cut them down. I had everything set up safely. I was on a ladder with someone holding it for me. Everything was fine. I cut the two branches, and the job was done. Between then and when I found myself on my back, I don't remember anything.

I fell and fractured vertebrae in my neck and back. My spinal cord was injured. I had surgery at Sacré-Cœur and was discharged from the Gingras-Lindsay-de-Montréal Rehabilitation Institute on August 19.

I'm regaining mobility, but I know I'll have some lasting effects. My biggest fear was losing so much mobility that it would severely limit what I could do. But I think I'm on the right track.

Q: What do you think about the teams at Sacré-Cœur?

Mr. Giroux: I have nothing but good things to say about everyone who cared for me, from the nurses and doctors to the support staff and physiotherapists. They were incredibly supportive and compassionate. To keep your spirits up while recovering from an accident, you need to feel supported. I never felt that anyone was doing something just because they had to or that they were in a rush. The health care professionals took the time to explain things. Whenever I had a question, they took the time to answer it. There was always respect. There are moments when you're feeling vulnerable or down, but they know how to adapt to that. Despite the difficult experience I've been through, I have only good things to say about my time at Sacré-Cœur.

Q: You also took part in research projects led by Dr. Mac-Thiong and his team, right?

Mr. Giroux: Yes, and the team is really incredible! I decided to participate because I hoped it would help people in the future. The support I received throughout the process was helpful. I could see that they wanted to go beyond basic care, to do research that is really vital to advance medicine.

Q: Dr. Mac-Thiong, what can you tell us about your research?

Dr. Jean-Marc Mac-Thiong: Our research focuses on two main areas. The first is the assessment, screening and diagnosis of spinal cord injuries. The spinal cord is like an electrical network, with electrical signals travelling through it. In the past, we assessed its function through physical examinations: we observed how people moved and how they felt. But this only gives us a partial picture of the injury. We developed a new technique to assess the electrical function of the spinal cord at its lower end, in the perianal region, using surface electrodes to measure sensation, reflexes and motor function.

We are also among the first to study how spinal cord injuries affect the brain. We're studying how the brain adapts after an injury so that we can target these changes as well and help patients recover.

The second area of research is intervention. Our main focus is on getting patients moving as soon as possible after a spinal cord injury. These injuries often cause paralysis, sometimes severe, which limits mobility. In the past, patients were generally kept immobilized for days or even weeks after an injury. They spent most of their time in bed. The priority was to make sure they were recovering properly, that their bodies were

functioning as they should and that complications were prevented. This approach left patients largely passive in their own recovery.

What we've learned over the years is that if people with a spinal cord injury are immobilized, they recover less effectively. We've shown that mobilization helps create new connections between neurons. Physical activity can help promote these new connections and aid recovery. We completed the first study involving people with spinal cord injuries who began cycling within two days of their injury. We have them cycle for 30 minutes each day to stimulate the nervous system and aid recovery. We know that the effect of stimulating the spinal cord is less pronounced if we wait one to two weeks than if we start very early.

My colleague, Dr. Andréane Richard-Denis, and I showed in a study that people with spinal cord injuries who take part in research projects have better mental and physical outcomes. Our projects keep them active and help reduce complications. They also have a better chance of seeing an improvement in their condition. Research and clinical care go hand in hand. We carry out many small research projects that help improve our clinical practice.

Q: What makes you optimistic about the future?

Dr. Mac-Thiong: Twenty years ago, we put a lot of effort into just keeping patients alive. Today, there's a lot of multidisciplinary research being done on spinal cord injuries, and we're starting to understand a lot more. So in the future, when it comes to mobility, we'll be able to offer innovative solutions that allow patients to live the kind of life they want. We'll be able to improve neurological recovery, reduce secondary complications and offer new technical solutions that will enable people to be more mobile, particularly when it comes to walking.

Some patients have an injury and unfortunately, their nervous system has gone back to square one, before they took their first steps. In our lab, we want to guide the nervous system so it rewires itself. Our goal is to help patients and their nervous systems reach their full potential, so they can regain as much normal function, independence and quality of life as possible. We're a large team, and being designated as an expert centre for spinal cord injuries has given us the opportunity to work with many patients and health care professionals. That has helped us improve.

Q: What would you like to say to the donors who support the Foundation?

Dr. Mac-Thiong: The Foundation gives us funding, but it also gives us extra motivation The donors have played a major role in helping me get to where I am today in my practice. The Foundation enabled us to establish the Medtronic Chair in Spinal Trauma, which I've held since 2010. The funding for the chair is used mainly to support young researchers in their work. With the Foundation's support, we know we have people behind us who believe in our projects.

Among the projects supported by the Foundation, there is the purchase of stationary bike for patients who are still in bed, allowing rehabilitation to begin soon after a spinal cord injury. Shown here is Jean-Marc Giroux, who agreed to take part in the research project. Mr. Giroux's words echo Dr. Mac-Thiong's: he says that the support he received throughout his care made a major difference to his well-being.

Mr. Giroux: Dr. Mac-Thiong says reinforces something I've always believed: that medical advances can give patients like us hope for the future. I've really been inspired by the research being done at Sacré-Cœur because it is concrete and practical. I think my recovery is going as well as it is because of the research that has been done over the years, and the support that the Foundation's donors have provided to researchers.

> ***"Unfortunately—and this is true of myself as well—we tend to wait until we need care before we think about giving."***

Dr. Mac-Thiong: One of my greatest hopes is that everyone—whether they live near a tertiary trauma centre like Sacré-Cœur or not—can benefit from medical advances, receive the same care and have the chance to regain as much independence as possible. ■

Four experts share their views on the future of health care

Every day, teams at Sacré-Cœur care for patients while also seeking new ways to innovate and improve health care. We spoke with a researcher, a cardiac care nurse, a clinician-educator and a resident about what lies ahead for health care. They all believe that donors and partners will play an essential role in the Foundation's future.

Investing in sectors of research excellence

With Louis De Beaumont
Director of Research and Innovation at Santé Québec Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal – Universitaire

A year into his role as Director of Research and Innovation, Louis De Beaumont is focused on developing areas of research that directly improve patient care and supporting their growth for years to come.

De Beaumont believes research should be closely connected to the realities of patients and care teams. "Research and clinical care need to go hand in hand, as much as possible, to improve the quality of care," he says.

In his view, lasting philanthropic support creates the conditions needed for major scientific advances: it provides the stability needed to attract highly qualified people, develop infrastructure and secure additional funding.

This is particularly true at Hôpital du Sacré-Cœur's Integrated Trauma Centre, one of Quebec's largest trauma centres, with highly specialized expertise in neurotrauma, critical care and spinal cord injury research. The ITC's teams are using artificial intelligence and advanced data analysis to develop new approaches to diagnosis and treatment.

Beyond project funding, research also depends on infrastructure designed to meet the demands of modern science. Research facilities need the equipment, digital infrastructure and specialized spaces required to advance research in the decades to come.

Louis De Beaumont believes that research will be a vital part of Sacré-Cœur's future. That means building on current areas of excellence (such as sleep research), attracting top talent, developing modern infrastructure and sustaining strong philanthropic support in the long term.

Sharing knowledge in nursing and electrophysiology

With Judith Bérubé
Clinical-Administrative Coordinator, Cardiovascular and Respiratory Health Program, Montréal Sacré-Cœur Hospital

Today, Judith Bérubé plays a key role behind the scenes on the hospital's care units. After more than 15 years as a nurse, including at specialized cardiology centres, she now helps introduce new technologies and develop solutions to improve the patient experience in cardiac care.

Electrophysiology, which focuses on the heart's electrical activity, has advanced a great deal over the past two decades. These advances have opened up new treatment options for patients who were once difficult to treat. Pacemaker and defibrillator implantation procedures and ablations are increasingly common, with shorter procedure times, greater effectiveness and improved safety. Arrhythmias can also be localized more precisely, significantly reducing complications and improving success rates for treatment.

In the medium term, Judith Bérubé expects the hospital to expand its capacity to care for cardiac patients. That expansion is already underway with the opening of a fourth hemodynamics and electrophysiology lab, made possible by support from the Foundation. Donor support will also help create the resources and spaces needed to shift to same-day surgeries and advance research that can make a real difference for patients.

Ms. Bérubé believes nursing will become increasingly specialized, with greater emphasis on knowledge sharing. When nurses specialize and work closely with physicians and other health professionals, patients benefit. This collaborative approach allows nurses to deepen their knowledge and clinical expertise, which in turn improves the quality of care.

Where teaching and robotics come together

With Dr. Hai Huynh
Co-Director of the Teaching Expertise Centre, general and robotic surgeon, and trauma surgeon

In Dr. Hai Huynh's view—and in his day-to-day practice—robotics and teaching go hand in hand. He believes that whether you are just starting your residency or have more than 25 years of experience, there is always more to learn. This is particularly true at a teaching hospital like Sacré-Cœur.

Dr. Huynh is clear: every new technology requires new approaches to teaching. Over the years, Sacré-Cœur has developed strong expertise in simulation, medical education and minimally invasive surgery. The hospital continues to explore the best ways to teach the next generation to use new technologies, including robotics.

The Teaching Expertise Centre trains future health professionals in a safe environment and with effective teaching methods. Trainees take an active role in patient care, working alongside health care teams and developing the skills they need to sharpen their clinical judgment and manage complications.

Training is about more than technical skills; communication and patient care are just as important. To make training more realistic, the Centre's instructors use high-fidelity simulation mannequins that can display patients' vital signs and create a more immersive clinical environment. Partly funded by the Foundation, these mannequins help learners practise in conditions that closely resemble real-world care. Dr. Huynh also believes there is potential to further personalize training through artificial intelligence, simulation and robotics. Making these advances possible will require appropriate training spaces, upgrades to existing IT resources and the continued support of experienced educators—all of which depend on community support.

Looking ahead, the clinician-educator envisions a hospital where patient care, education, research and innovation come together and build on one another. In other words, an integrated trauma centre on a hospital-wide scale.

Philanthropic support for major health care projects

With Cyril Gagnon
Resident physician at Montréal Sacré-Cœur Hospital and a member of the Foundation's Youth Wing

Cyril Gagnon is at a pivotal stage in his career: he began his medical residency two years ago. Now a graduate, he works in a hospital while continuing to develop the skills he needs to practise independently.

Still early in his career, he has already witnessed the exceptional expertise of the teams at Sacré-Cœur and their ability to take on ambitious projects. One of the projects he hopes will become a reality is the Integrated Renal Support Centre, a more modern and comfortable care environment for patients who require dialysis.

As Cyril Gagnon looks out at the helipad on the Sacré-Cœur grounds, he imagines an advanced helicopter transport system that could speed up the emergency transfer of patients—including victims of serious accidents—to the hospital, improving their chances of survival. In the longer term, the young physician hopes to see investments that modernize infrastructure and build on Quebec expertise. Above all, he wants to harness promising medical innovations to save more lives and shorten wait times for vital procedures.

Cyril Gagnon is also a member of the Foundation's Youth Wing. As one of only two members who work at Sacré-Cœur, he has a unique perspective on the needs of the hospital and the impact donations have on patients and care.

In his view, **the Foundation plays an essential role in connecting health care professionals who are shaping the future of care with people who want to support their work**. By bringing together a large community of donors, the Foundation is helping build a bright future for philanthropy.

A historic gift for mental health care

On September 23, our Foundation received the largest gift in its history. The Lise and Giuseppe Racanelli Foundation announced an extraordinary $20-million donation to support Albert-Prévost Mental Health Hospital. This landmark gift will have a lasting impact on mental health care and research.

Left to right: Véronique Racanelli, president of Lise and Giuseppe Racanelli Foundation, Giuseppe Racanelli, Lise Racanelli and Julie Pouliot, president and CEO of the Foundation.

The Racanelli family's own experience with mental health inspired them to turn hardship into hope. Having seen firsthand the challenges faced by people experiencing a mental health crisis and their loved ones, the family chose to take action to improve mental health care.

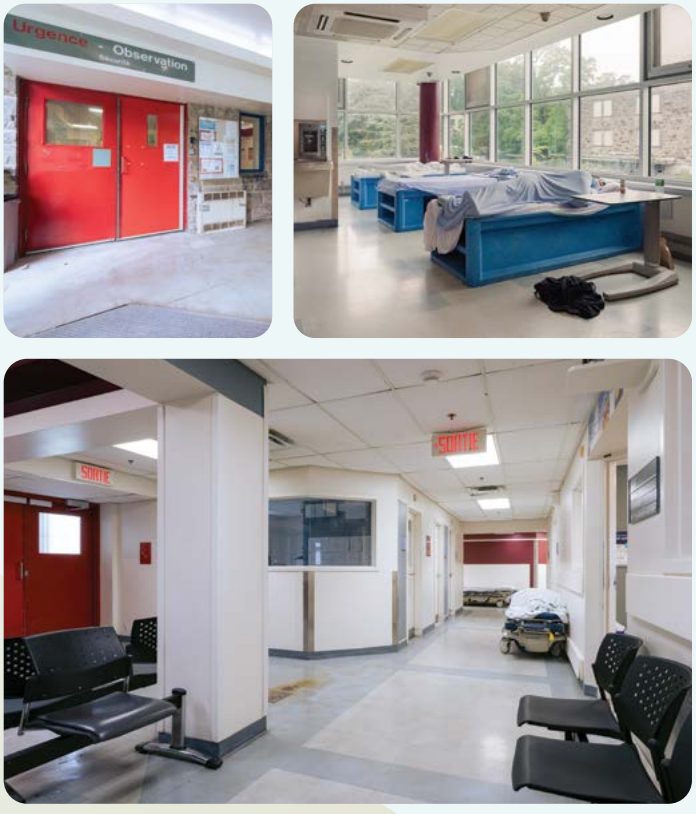
This historic gift will make it possible to expand and completely redesign the Albert-Prévost psychiatric emergency department. The new facilities will offer a calmer, more welcoming environment better suited to the needs of patients, their families and care teams. They will include quiet rooms, private spaces and dedicated areas for loved ones.

> "We hope that our contribution will inspire other members of the community to do the same, as the needs in mental health are immense."

Véronique Racanelli
President, Lise and Giuseppe Racanelli Foundation

The investment will also support the creation of a research chair in schizophrenia, in partnership with Université de Montréal. This initiative will help advance our understanding of this complex illness and develop more personalized approaches to treatment.

This extraordinary gift marks a turning point for Albert-Prévost and for mental health care in Quebec. The Foundation warmly thanks the Racanelli family for their exceptional generosity and trust, which will make a lasting difference in the lives of thousands of families.



A few photos of the existing emergency department at Albert-Prévost Mental Health Hospital.

Celebrating half a century of generosity and commitment

Since its creation in 1976, and even in the years before it was established, kind-hearted people have generously given their time, expertise and energy to supporting the Foundation's mission. As part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, the Foundation honoured some of these individuals for their commitment at an event held on May 27.

A very special mark of appreciation

Marwah Rizqy, who, at that time, was still a MNA for Saint-Laurent, where the hospital and Foundation are located, took part in the celebrations to present awards recognizing individuals whose generosity has made a lasting impact on our Foundation and a meaningful difference in our community.

Nadine Leroux, the Foundation's Senior Director of Marketing and Communications, was honoured for her outstanding contribution to her community. Ms. Rizqy presented Nadine with a National Assembly Member's Medal on behalf of Catherine Gentilcore, MNA for Nadine's home riding of Terrebonne.

Nadine Leroux, Guy Crevier, Jocelyne Leroux and Marcel Caya, with Marwah Rizqy.

The award honours Nadine's remarkable career and longstanding commitment to her community. She has worked in philanthropy since completing her studies and has been with the Foundation for 23 years. As the Foundation's longest-serving employee, she plays a key role in bringing its many projects to life and demonstrating the impact of donations on the community.

Six exceptional volunteers also received special distinctions:

- **Mr. Guy Crevier**, one of the Foundation's six founding members. He has devoted decades to helping build the organization.
- **Dr. Jean-Luc Malo**, who played a key role in establishing the Foundation's art collection, which now includes 350 works displayed at Sacré-Cœur Hospital and Albert-Prévost Mental Health Hospital.

- **Jocelyne Leroux**, **Marcel Caya**, **Pierre Chaussée** and **Suzanne Gingras**, who have each dedicated more than 20 years to volunteering.

An active Youth Wing, driven by generosity

The evening also highlighted Salvatore Crivello's contribution. After helping establish the Youth Wing in 2016, he spent seven years helping it grow and recruiting new members. He also represented the Youth Wing on the Foundation's Board of Directors.

The Youth Wing is very active today. Motivated and energetic, its members, aged 25 to 35, are focused on engaging new donors in their workplaces. The group also hosts an annual fundraising event.

Salvatore Crivello with his two girls on the right, and Bernard Pitre, Chair of the Foundation's Board of Directors.

UNTIL DECEMBER 31ST

BRING LIGHT TO SACRÉ-CŒUR

The Foundation extends its heartfelt thanks to the partners who helped bring this campaign to life!

Master Group
Lumen
Deschenes Group
Décors Véronneau

Together, let's create a brighter future!

This year, as Montréal Sacré-Cœur Hospital celebrates its 100th anniversary, you're invited to take part in **BRING LIGHT TO SACRÉ-CŒUR**, a large campaign centred on hope, gratitude and solidarity. This initiative will transform the trees lining the hospital's main drive into a stunning light display, creating a collective work of art that symbolizes the impact of every donation.

Each light will represent more than just a financial contribution. It will shine as a symbol of support for patients, their families, health care professionals and everyone who works each day to advance care, research and innovation.

Lise Dion, leading a wave of generosity.

Discover her connection to the hospital on our website.

Three years after her heart attack, Lise Dion wishes to express her heartfelt gratitude to the doctors and care teams who contributed to her recovery, while shining a light on their exceptional work.

Make a difference with a light: **Donate to the *Bring Light to Sacré-Cœur* campaign!**

TURN ON A LIGHT

$20 per light

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

Don't miss any of our exciting events during Montréal Sacré-Cœur Hospital's centennial.

Pénélope McQuade
Volunteer spokesperson

YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION:

♥ **Online** at fondationhscm.org ♥ **By Cheque** ♥ **By Phone**

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Founded in 1976 by the Sisters of Providence, the Montréal Sacré-Cœur Hospital Foundation has its raison d'être to help the extended Sacré-Cœur, Albert-Prévost and Rivière-des-Prairies team constantly improve the care, treatment and environment of patients, while supporting the research and teaching activity of these major university hospitals.

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