



MONTREAL  
SACRÉ-CŒUR  
HOSPITAL  
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# LIAISON

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“I fell in love  
with cardiology.”

- Dr Raja Hatem

interventional cardiologist, hemodynamic specialist



Credit: Ménad Kesraoui, photographer

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## Dr. Raja Hatem, a great asset to Sacré-Cœur's cardiology team

The parents of Dr. Raja Hatem, an interventional cardiologist (hemodynamic specialist), decided to leave Syria when he was only five years old, mainly to avoid their three sons' mandatory military service. Raja's brothers, who are 12 and 15 years older than him, are both engineers. Although the cardiologist does not know if he would have been able to study medicine in his home country, one thing is certain, his passion for his chosen path is still very much alive.

Today, Dr. Raja Hatem is one of eight hemodynamic specialists on the Sacré-Cœur cardiology team and is very proud of how far he has come. In addition to his involvement in teaching and clinical research, Dr. Hatem focuses his activities on the treatment of coronary artery disease, in particular on the percutaneous approach to the deobstruction of chronically occluded coronary arteries (CTO) and other complex hemodynamic procedures (CHIP). He is currently the director of the CTO-CHIP program at Sacré-Cœur Hospital.

### Q: Why did you choose cardiology?

A: After 4 years of medical school at the Université de Montréal's Trois-Rivières campus, I returned to Montreal to do my specialty in internal medicine. I enjoyed my internship in intensive care and fell in love with cardiology. Following this interest, I did an internship at the Montreal Heart Institute with, among others, Dr. Martin Juneau who really inspired me with his calm demeanour, his knowledge and his kindness towards his patients.

### Q: What brought you to Sacré-Cœur?

A: I then did my residency at Sacré-Cœur where I got to know Dr. Donald Palisaitis, who became like a second father to me over the years. He believed in me and went from mentor to colleague to friend. Also, during that first stint at Sacré-Cœur, I appreciated the atmosphere of the team, especially the integrity of the Chief of Cardiology, Dr. Érick Schampaert. Before leaving for Columbia University in New York, one of the best places in the world to go for expertise in complex coronary care, Dr. Schampaert told me that there would be a place for me when I returned and gave me a hearty handshake. I never forgot that. And even though I had offers to stay in the United States, I came back as planned.

*Dr. Raja Hatem and another of his young colleagues, Dr. Remi Kouz, were accepted to this prestigious university and both returned in 2017 to the cardiology team at the CIUSSS du Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. Dr. Kouz developed a specialty in structural cardiology and Dr. Hatem in complex interventional cardiology.*

### Q: What made you decide to return to Sacré-Cœur?

A: The atmosphere and the family spirit of the Cardiology Department are a big part of it. I also like the fact that, despite our expertise, we remain clinical cardiologists. This approach allows us to offer our services to several hospitals in the Laurentians (for example: Saint-Eustache, Sainte-Agathe, Mont-Laurier and Rivière-Rouge) and to keep our skills as clinicians active.

The team of nurses and technologists, under the leadership of Judith Bérubé and Isabelle Desaulniers, is also very much involved. We probably have one of the best performing teams in the province in terms of quality and quantity of care offered to our hemodynamic patients.

### Q: What attracted you to your specialty?

A: What impresses me about cardiology is that in the space of 30 minutes, you can change the game. You have an immediate impact. Someone who arrives in an ambulance with significant blockages can, after undergoing a percutaneous procedure, be back to doing their activities the very next day.

### Q: What advances are you focusing on in your area?

A: You don't have to go back that far to see the evolution of cardiology and interventional cardiology (hemodynamics). The first angioplasty was performed in 1977, in Switzerland. The first stent was installed in the 1990s and medicated stents were developed in the 2000s. Biomedical engineering has revolutionized the way we do things.

In the 1960s, when someone had a heart attack, we waited for it to pass and some were lucky enough to have bypass surgery. Today, we intervene as quickly as possible and we save a lot of lives. It is precisely because of this speed of intervention that we, the eight hemodynamic surgeons, must, for example, live within 20 minutes of the Sacré-Cœur Hospital. In 2022, for the sake of efficiency, even the electrocardiogram is done at the patient's home so that we can diagnose the infarction as quickly as possible. We're saving patients today that we weren't able to save just 30 years ago.



## What is?

**Structural cardiology:** specialty related to cardiac anomalies, mainly narrowed valves, treated by the implantation of new valves by catheter (TAVI).

**Hemodynamics:** specialty related to blood circulation in the coronary arteries, including coronary stent implantation.

**Electrophysiology:** specialty related to the electrical activity of the heart, normal and abnormal, including pacemaker implantation.

### Q: How are Sacré-Cœur patients benefiting from your time at Columbia?

A: Since returning from the U.S. in 2017, I've upgraded a lot of tools. This makes interventions easier whether they are simple or complex. I was fortunate to be able to meet the leaders of large companies at Columbia. This allowed me to create good connections which, along with the great local expertise of our team, promotes our national and international visibility.



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Dr. Raja Hatem works in front of a screen, using his hands and foot pedals to manipulate a guide to get to the location of the blocked artery to install a stent (a tiny tube) that holds the artery open to restore circulation. This obviously requires a great deal of coordination.

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### Q: How do you see the value of a new hybrid room?

A: Sacré-Cœur's cardiology team performs about 4,000 coronary angiographies per year. Of these, approximately 2,700 are performed in interventional cardiology. This year, we performed, among others, 80 transcatheter aortic valve replacements (TAVI) in structural cardiology and our waiting list is, unfortunately, still problematic.

We also serve the Laurentians, which are among the most aging populations, meaning that we are not able to absorb all the volume we would like. Hence the importance of having a third room. The two current rooms are already working at full capacity. It is important that room 1 be converted into a hybrid room with the collaboration of the Foundation. This will give us two hemodynamic rooms and a hybrid room. This improvement will allow us to better meet the needs of our population and to continue to develop our unique local expertise. □



## First in Canada

Dr. Hatem and Dr. Schampaert were the first in Canada, in March 2021, to use the OmniWire guide from Dutch giant Philips, which reduces the risk of complications and maximizes the chances of an optimal outcome for patients who require coronary intervention due to a blocked blood vessel. This first was highly publicized and with good reason.

During such a procedure, a hemodynamic specialist normally inserts a first guide wire (a very thin metal wire) into the artery to measure the pressure on the other side of the blockage. He then has to remove this wire and insert another one to go and fix the problem, then repeat the scenario until he is satisfied with the result. The new tool makes it possible to do everything with one guide that stays in place for the duration of the procedure.

# New cardiology rooms will help meet needs

Cardiovascular health is one of the areas of excellence at the Montreal Sacré-Cœur Hospital. Complex heart diseases are diagnosed and treated. It is one of the major reference centres in Quebec.



Dr. Érick Schampaert in one of the hospital's hemodynamic rooms.

According to Dr. Érick Schampaert, Head of the Cardiovascular Health Program at the CIUSSS du Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal, the practice has changed in recent years. It includes structural procedures, done in collaboration with cardiac hemodynamic surgeons, such as TAVI valve replacements (the alternative to open-heart surgery), chronic coronary occlusion deobstruction, and high-risk angioplasties with temporary mechanical support. **It is important to provide an optimal environment for these procedures, hence the importance of the new hybrid room project** (hemodynamic, electrophysiology and cardiac surgery room).

This upgrade of the current room to a hybrid room has been a dream of Dr. Schampaert's for many years. In this room, it will be possible to perform all the pacemaker-defibrillator implantations performed in electrophysiology. This will make the complex electrophysiology room available for ablation procedures that involve creating small scars in the abnormal

heart tissue responsible for the arrhythmias, thus restoring the normal heart rhythm. The waiting list for these ablation procedures is far too long.

## The generosity of donors makes this project possible

This new hybrid room, which will be ready in July, will also free up the two hemodynamic rooms, one of which is under reconstruction. The Foundation has invested \$3 million for the new hybrid room and the reconstruction of the existing room, **including \$1 million from a major donor, Quebecor.**

The Péladeau family has long supported cardiology at Sacré-Cœur, notably by contributing to the creation of the first hemodynamic rooms. Dr. Schampaert and his team are very grateful for their generous contribution and loyal support. Donor support makes a definite difference in their work and in the advancement of care in general.

This project and many others will provide better, more diverse, more adapted, more timely and more efficient care in a healthy and supportive work environment that is attentive to the needs of everyone, both patients and health care workers alike.

Coronary heart disease is still one of the leading causes of mortality and morbidity in Quebec and North America. However, its treatment and management have evolved enormously over the last few decades. The mortality and morbidity associated with this pathology have been steadily decreasing for the past forty years.

## A few numbers



The cardiology team is made up of **24 cardiologists**.



Nearly **2,000 hospitalizations** in cardiology each year.



More than **22,500 external consultations** annually.

## Dr. Érick Schampaert

Head of the cardiovascular health program at the CIUSSS du Nord-de-l'Île-de-Montréal



# Acceleration 2.0 Program: A great initiative of our researchers

A new program was recently implemented by the team at the Montreal Behavioural Medicine Centre (MBMC), a research laboratory founded in 2006 by Dr. Simon Bacon and Dr. Kim Lavoie and located at the Montreal Sacré-Cœur Hospital. **ACCELERATION 2.0 is offered free of charge!** It is a 12-week online educational program on the topics of physical activity and nutrition that enables measurable and effective modification of known risk factors and health behaviours leading to chronic disease.

Two MBMC-certified kinesiologists, Marla Calixte-Robert and Fanie St-Jean Miron, guide participants through the program. Those targeted by this study project are all Canadians who are at risk of developing chronic diseases if they do not change their lifestyle habits. It should be noted that 80% of premature chronic diseases can be prevented by being active, eating healthy, avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol consumption.

The program activities are diverse and interactive. They include educational workbooks on popular health topics, virtual one-on-one sessions, virtual group peer support sessions, and access to a medical library.

**ACCELERATION 2.0** helps participants realize the importance of healthy living. Researchers can push the boundaries of clinical research, education and evidence-based care.

**To participate, you must meet one of these criteria:**

- I get less than 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week
- I eat less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day
- I have smoked at least one cigarette in the past week
- Most days I feel a little or extremely stressed



**For more information, please contact:**

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## Development of a new treatment for psoriasis

A research project aimed at developing a treatment for psoriasis recently obtained the necessary support to get started. This research by the team of Dr. Mohamed Benderdour, a researcher in the Surgery Department at Sacré-Cœur Hospital, will progress thanks to its partners: the Sacré-Cœur Hospital Research Centre, NanoGene Therapeutics, the Quebec Consortium for Drug Discovery (CQDM), the Orthopedic Research Chair of the Université de Montréal and our Foundation.

"Together with our collaborators, we will develop a novel approach to produce non-viral vectors to target inflammation. This new avenue could help address unmet therapeutic needs in skin diseases, including psoriasis," said Dr. Mohamed Benderdour.

Psoriasis affects approximately **one million Canadians and 125 million people worldwide**. It is an inflammatory disease that affects all organs and tissues, but primarily the skin and joints. It is usually characterized by the appearance of thick patches of skin that flake off in white scales. The patches appear on different parts of the body, most often on the elbows, knees and scalp. They leave areas of red skin.



**Dr. Mohamed Benderdour**

Researcher at Sacré-Cœur

# A special guide developed by one of our geriatric psychiatrists

The [psychopap.com](https://psychopap.com) website is an initiative of the professionals of the Psychotherapy Centre of the Albert-Prévost Mental Health Hospital. It was put online in the year of Albert-Prévost's centennial in 2019. This site is a reliable source of information for someone who wants to start psychotherapy or simply wants basic information.

In times of pandemic, with a flagrant lack of resources in mental health, the managers of the site have made a welcome service of tools to manage stress available to the general public.

The site includes a **complete guide entitled "Gestion du stress pour les personnes âgées pendant la pandémie liée à la COVID-19"** (Stress Management for Seniors during the COVID-19 Pandemic) written by two geriatric psychiatrists, Dr. Nathalie Shamlan of the Albert-Prévost Mental Health Hospital and Dr. Claude Bergeron of the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal. This guide is a great reference document. It includes suggestions for seniors and caregivers, as well as numerous links to relevant websites and reference documents. In this guide, we also deal with positive psychology: the goal of the interventions is to promote personal growth and well-being.

With this 6th wave hitting us, combined with several stressful events, such as the war in Ukraine, it is interesting to be able to rely on this tool developed through one of our areas of mental health expertise, geriatric psychiatry. The objective of this document is to present several strategies, adapted to seniors, that can be useful to reduce anxiety and distress in these more uncertain times.



In this guide, you will find details to help you implement these recommendations:

- Preserve or implement a **healthy lifestyle**.
- Get exposure to **daylight** on a daily basis.
- Exercise in a **safe and appropriate manner**.
- Stick to your regular **routine**.
- **Promote communication** by optimizing sensory function, such as proper use of hearing aids or wearing glasses, if necessary.
- Take your medications **as prescribed** by your doctor.
- **Avoid abuse or excess** consumption of alcohol and wine, drugs or "nerve" (such as benzodiazepines) or "pain" (such as narcotics) medications.
- Stay up to date with current events, but in **small doses**.
- Try **to vary your activities** so that they become sources of distraction and pleasure.
- Consider **writing your personal history**, so you can pass on your memories or know-how to younger generations.
- **Be creative** and reconnect with some forgotten pleasures.
- Take the opportunity to gradually **advance your to-do list**.
- Practice **relaxation** and **meditation**, which can help you better manage stress.
- **Stay connected with your loved ones** in different ways and through all the communication channels you have.
- Identify and build on your **resiliency factors**. You have experience and you have surely gone through different trials in your life with success.

Consult this guide

# A legacy gift in recognition of Sacré-Cœur's expertise

As a loyal donor since 2008, Mr. Raymond Arès was not spared by illness. He has needed the knowledge and expertise of Sacré-Cœur's doctors and care teams on numerous occasions over the past 20 years to regain his health. **He recognizes the value of these men and women who have given him back a wonderful quality of life.**

It is for this reason that he and his wife, Louise Guillemette, decided two years ago, when redoing their will, to ask their notary to add the Foundation as one of the beneficiaries. For them, supporting this hospital is a well-thought-out gesture. **"I consider myself privileged in life and so, for me, it is very important to give back.** I like giving to the charities I care about. My children are also quite privileged. I don't think they need my help to survive," said Arès. "That's our decision and I'm sure our children agree with it," added Ms. Guillemette. Mr. Arès added that he hopes his children will be as generous to the causes they support.

## A bond of trust with Sacré-Cœur's experts

It must be said that a great bond was created between the donor and Sacré-Cœur over the years, before arriving at this ultimate gesture of giving. In 1999, Mr. Arès was diagnosed and followed for rheumatoid arthritis, which is an inflammatory arthritis in which the joints, usually of the hands and feet, develop inflammation, resulting in swelling, pain and often destruction of the joints. Dr. François Beaudet followed him until the rheumatologist retired 5 or 6 years ago.

Other health issues, including a breast tumor in 2008, meant that Mr. Arès needed the experts at Sacré-Cœur. "Each time I was followed at Sacré-Cœur for different health issues, it was a reason to give even more. The only thing Sacré-Cœur lacks is single rooms and more modern facilities," said Arès.

## From a pure gift to a gift of shares... to a gift in a will

It was Mr. Arès's accountant who suggested that he make a donation of shares a few years ago. "He saw that I was making a lot of donations from money that was already taxed. It was more expensive. He told me, if you donate shares, you save the capital gains tax. That's when I decided to do this type of donation. I do it whenever the opportunity or the charity I'm donating to allows me to do so," said Mr. Arès. He explains that this way he can give more.

For him, **there is nothing complicated about making a donation of shares.** All you have to do is fill out the form provided by the Foundation and send it to your financial institution, which may ask you to fill out another form, but that's it. "Another advantage is that every time I make a donation of shares, the financial



Mrs Guillemette and Mr Arès, donors.

institution does not deduct brokerage fees. It's free. Nothing is taken out of the donation, it all goes to the charity."

According to Arès, **the same is true for a legacy gift.** When updating their will, the couple took the opportunity to provide a list of non-profit organizations to which they wanted to leave a certain amount. Everything was planned by the notary according to their wishes. They are both very proud of this decision they made a few years ago, and this in full respect of their personal values.

**If you would like more information or have any questions, please contact me. I will be happy to answer them.**

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Dr. Stéphane Leduc, orthopedist,  
and on the right,  
Cédric Bolduc-Méthot.

## First edition of *Le Sentier de l'Espoir*

The first edition of *Le Sentier de l'Espoir* was initiated by Cédric Bolduc-Méthot in recognition of the orthopedic care he has received since he was a child at the Montreal Sacré-Cœur Hospital. Just recently, he was operated on again by the orthopedic's team for a hip problem. As an elite runner, Cédric Bolduc-Méthot owes it to Sacré-Cœur's orthopedic team that he can continue practicing the sport he loves so much! His story is fascinating. He has consulted with the orthopedic specialists several times over the past 15 years to be able to participate in high level races.

**The fundraising event, *Le Sentier de l'Espoir*, will be held on Saturday, June 11 at Bois de l'Équerre in Laval. There is still time to register! This is a trail run with 100% of the proceeds going to our Foundation for the Orthopedic Department.**

With trails of 1 km, 5 km or 10 km, the event is accessible to all. Children, adults, Sunday runners or super athletes will have the pleasure of walking or running for the cause in the magnificent trails of one of Laval's last great urban forests.

The registration fee varies between \$20 and \$40, depending on the distance chosen. If you agree to give your medal when you register, the value of the medal will be donated to our Foundation.

Learn more about touching  
*Sacré-Cœur* stories

## DÉFI DES GÉNÉRATIONS



**Josée Lavigueur**  
Event spokesperson

## The *Défi des générations*: Surpassing yourself for your hospital!

It is with great enthusiasm that our Foundation is participating this year in the Défi des générations, a great movement of solidarity that will take place throughout Quebec this summer in support of hospitals. Seventeen hospital foundations from nine regions of the province will take part in this edition. The Défi des générations aims to unite thousands of participants in surpassing themselves either alone or in teams, by taking on a challenge of their choice, while raising funds to support their hospital. **The official launch will take place on June 14.** In the meantime, think about a challenge you'd like to take on! A race with the kids? A cycling expedition? A fitness goal? Stay tuned for more details.

### YOU CAN MAKE A DONATION:

Online  By Cheque  By Phone 

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

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**Pénélope McQuade**  
Volunteer spokesperson

