



CANADIAN WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH SUMMIT ▶ 2023

APRIL 28-29, 2023 · VANCOUVER, BC · WOMENSHEARTSUMMIT.CA



2023 Canadian Women's Heart Health Summit

Speaker Details



Paula Henderson
Woman with Lived Experience
London, ON

Biography

LIVED EXPERIENCE WITH HEART FAILURE

I was born with a congenital heart defect called Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy (HOCM). My mother had this, as did her mother. Basically, it means my heart muscle is too thick, making it very hard for my heart to pump. When I was younger and participating in running teams at school, I experienced shortness of breath, which was to be expected; however, I was very fortunate not to experience any serious effects of the condition.

Years later, in 2008, my cardiologist could hear that my murmur had loudened, and in 2010, I became very symptomatic and had to undergo an open-heart surgery called Septal Myectomy to cut some of the heart muscle to relieve the obstruction. Unfortunately, the surgery was not successful and in 2012 I had to undergo a second open-heart surgery: a revision of the Septal Myectomy. Sadly, I sustained a cardiac arrest following surgery and was thankfully revived. I was medically managed for 8 years with many hospital admissions along the way.

In 2020, I again became very symptomatic as my Aortic and Mitral valves were now severely leaking. I was assessed for a heart transplant. I was told that because of my blood type and antibodies, the wait for a new heart would possibly take more than a year, however my heart couldn't wait that long. I



CANADIAN WOMEN'S HEART HEALTH SUMMIT ▶ 2023

APRIL 28-29, 2023 · VANCOUVER, BC · WOMENSHEARTSUMMIT.CA



underwent a third open-heart surgery to replace the Aortic and Mitral valves with mechanical valves. I'm presently being followed closely at the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre in Toronto.

PATIENT ENGAGEMENT

Over the past year, I have been participating in research with the Ted Rogers Centre for Heart Research, The University Health Network, and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and the Canadian Heart Failure Alliance. This has given me a huge opportunity to contribute as a Patient With Lived Experience (PWLE). I'm thoroughly enjoying each research project and am building on my advocacy for heart research. I've also connected with several Heart Failure Support Facebook groups. I have finally found 'my people' and am so grateful for the learning from other heart failure patient's experiences and their support. I also enjoy the benefit of modern technology; I am managing my health through an app on my phone called Medly which connects directly to my heart failure specialist at the Peter Munk Cardiac Centre in Toronto.

MOVING FORWARD

While managing my heart failure is a day-to-day trial, I genuinely want to continue in other heart failure research endeavours. I feel very motivated to help others suffering with this disease, and truly hope to continue make a difference. This disease is a hard nut to crack some days, but I am so grateful to have an exceptional health care team at the click of my mouse.

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND

I worked for several years with our Health Unit and the Southwest Local Health Integration here in London, Ontario. I worked in Client Services delivering home care and preparing clients to enter into Long Term Care. My last few years was as an Educator/Data Analyst where I experienced the behind the scenes of the financial outcomes for those receiving home care or Long Term Care. Unfortunately I was not able to return to work after my second open heart surgery in 2012.

PERSONAL INTERESTS

Reading, gardening, playing guitar, cooking, baking