



Canadian Women's Heart Health Alliance

Advocacy Working Group | Member Profile



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Registered Social Worker
Woman with Lived Experience
Ottawa, ON
Member since 2022

Biography

I experienced what is believed to be a MINOCA, March 3, 2021 at the age of 55. The only obvious risk factor was hypertension. This caught me off guard as there is no history of heart disease in my family. Despite having worked at the Heart and Stroke Foundation, I did not recognize my symptoms (sore left shoulder blade).

This started a merry-go-round of many invasive tests, ER visits, and several diagnostic hypotheses. I endured frequent and severe angina for months and wondered if I would ever get relief. The latest possible diagnosis is Kounis syndrome. The prescribed treatment is helping and I am now able to work part time and continue to learn about how to best take care of myself.

My patient story has just been posted here: <https://www.internationalheartspasmsalliance.org/patient-stories/dima/>

Having gone through such a difficult year, I want to offer what I can to help other women learn more about heart disease and advocate for themselves.

Professionally I bring the following:

Twenty years ago, I was the Admin Assistant to the Director of Health Promotion of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. I sat in on the meetings of the National Committee for Health Promotion. Most of the consumer educational materials were revised by this committee and came across my desk. Between my BSW and MSW I worked in Montreal at the Constance Lethbridge Rehabilitation Centre, now called The McKay something something.... I was part of an interdisciplinary team that provided an 8-week intensive Chronic pain self-management program. In my capacity of social worker, I provided psycho-education workshops to patients in regards to stress management, communication, relaxation, problem solving, setting goals - and reinforced what they learned in their other groups (energy management, exercise, posture, etc.) I also provided supportive counselling to patients and their



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families while they participated in the program. I was occasionally called upon to present our program to students from McGill studying physiotherapy, OT or Kinesiology.

I have been in private practice for six years. Along with providing psychotherapy to individuals living with the effects of trauma, I also teach other professionals (counsellors, psychologists and psychotherapists) on the use of therapeutic writing. It is a 14-hour course that I have designed, and it is accredited through the Ordre de psychologues du Québec. I teach in English and in French. I have also written an in-depth manual to accompany this course.

I have participated on many boards through work (The Canadian Hearing Society, Lowertown Community Resource Centre) and as a volunteer on the advisory board of the Mobile Crisis line