



March 20, 2018

Dear Members,

The fall of 2017 marked 20 years since our very first meeting at Tim Hortons in what eventually became the Wegener's Granulomatosis Support Group of Canada or WGSG Canada, the predecessor of today's VFC. Your continued support over many years, and in many ways, sustains us, and allows us to continue to pursue our goals of improving patient *care* and disease *control*, while continuing to push research towards the *cause* and *cure* of all forms of vasculitis. It has been a long road but we have seen tremendous improvements and our presence has helped in many ways for those living with vasculitis.

Our 2017 AGM marked another two milestones in Dr. Siminovitch's vasculitis research, firstly, she gave her presentation remotely via GoToMeeting which enabled members, who could not attend in Cambridge, to hear another of her research updates, and we hope to do this again. Secondly, we were introduced to the next step in her fresh blood cell (FBC), research which utilizes a newer technology called CyTOF. This technology uses the FBC's from GPA patients and is analyzed within about 2 hours at Toronto's Sick Kids Hospital where the CyTOF machine is located. Due to time-to-lab restrictions this study can only be done at the Toronto Vasculitis Clinic and also uses routine labs, ANCA, ESR, CRP etc. to form a complete GPA lab "picture" along with the FBC results. It is hoped this research will unlock more clues on the "signature" of GPA and perhaps other vasculitic diseases.

In February 2017 we learned of an unsuccessful VFC combined grant application together with Canadian and Dutch Vasculitis, Lupus and Rheumatoid Arthritis researchers, and patient groups, for ~\$5M in funding. It was a disappointing outcome, but progress in one sense in that it was a first for VFC to be included in such a complex national and international funding competition. Unfortunately, no VFC research grants were awarded in 2017. Together with CanVasc we continued to lobby to extend Rituximab funding/coverage for maintenance treatment.

As in the past, we hosted or participated in a number of successful events, with many of you attending multiple events, like our 19th annual picnic and walk in Cambridge, and the 4th annual BriStrength walk in Orillia. Both events raised important funds for research, and a fun time was had by all!

The fall 2017 lectures (including lab draws), at Toronto Western Hospital were informative and well attended with research updates by Dr.'s: Pagnoux, and Siminovitch. Topics not presented previously by VFC included the short course on osteoporosis by Dr. Ridout and the huge topic of nutrition by Tzabia Siegel, The Food Coach, were especially well received, copies of their presentations are available on request. Dr. Abbey, Psychiatrist-in Chief at UHN did another very helpful session on the emotional and physical aspects of illness and coping.

In 2017 we invested in a new "event" software from Blackbaud, called Team Raiser (TR), which simplifies the running and accounting for our walks etc. We used TR for our 2017 Cambridge walk which featured easy team building, and huge time saving online and emailed tax receipts. We hope to continue to implement more automation and time saving features of the TR software in 2018.

Finally, after two years as VFC Treasurer Manreet Grewal is stepping down at our 2018 AGM. Manreet is getting married this summer and will be moving to Kelowna B.C. We wish Manreet all the best as she enters a new chapter of life and hope she keeps in touch. To be more effective we still need more volunteers, I encourage you to play a role. In particular, we can use help with fundraising, bookkeeping, our website and assistance with programs like QuickBooks, Blackbaud, WordPress, GoToMeeting etc.

I encourage all of you to get involved in some way in the activities of your organization. I look forward to seeing all of you throughout 2018, and wish you and yours the best of health.

Warm regards,

Jon Stewart
President, Vasculitis Foundation Canada

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