



POGO

PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY GROUP OF ONTARIO

FOR KIDS WITH CANCER
FOR NOW, FOR LIFE.

2025 Impact Report

OUR PARTNERS IN CANCER CARE



POGO Partner Hospitals diagnose and treat children (5)



POGO Interlink Nurses provide personalized, comprehensive nursing care to children and families (16)



POGO Satellite Clinics in community hospitals bring care closer to home (9)



POGO AfterCare Clinics monitor survivors for long-term effects from cancer treatment (8)



POGO Transitions Counsellors support survivors as they transition to further school or work (7)

INTERLINK NURSES AND TRANSITIONS COUNSELLORS SERVE PATIENTS, FAMILIES, AND SURVIVORS ACROSS ONTARIO

A message from

OUR CEO & MEDICAL DIRECTOR

A childhood cancer diagnosis is often just the beginning of a long and complex journey—one that doesn't necessarily end when treatment does. Even when a child is declared cancer-free, the physical, emotional and day-to-day challenges can continue long after. And that's why your support makes such a difference.

Because of you, families navigating childhood cancer were met with care, compassion and expertise every step of the way. Together, we expanded our reach across Ontario—growing care teams and enhancing programs and services. More families received support from the moment of diagnosis, more children accessed vital care closer to home, and more survivors received the support they need to plan for life after cancer.

"Ensuring the health and well-being of pediatric cancer survivors in Northern Ontario means more than just recovery; it's about coordinating long-term care, vigilant monitoring for secondary cancers, and offering support that keeps them close to home. Together, we are helping and empowering every survivor to thrive with the resources they need, where they need them most."

Tanya Hobson POGO Satellite Clinic Nurse & POGO AfterCare Case Manager, Health Sciences North

We introduced Ontario's newest Childhood Cancer Care Plan—outlining system priorities for the next five years that we'll advance in collaboration with our partners. All our work is grounded in a commitment to building on evidence, using data to guide planning and analysis, and sharing knowledge with care teams across the province—strengthening a childhood cancer care system that is evidence-informed, equitable and responsive, now and into the future.

Every step of this work is possible because of you—our donors, government, partners, volunteers and champions. Together, we're building a stronger, more connected childhood cancer care system across Ontario. Thank you for being an essential part of this progress.

With heartfelt thanks,



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lauren Ettin".

Lauren Ettin
CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Donna Johnston".

Donna Johnston
Medical Director

FAMILY SUPPORT

POGO provides wraparound support such as expert nursing care in hospital and at home through the Interlink Nursing Program, treatment closer to home through our Satellite Clinics and financial relief through our Financial Assistance Program.

POGO **Interlink Nurses** provided essential support to **over 1,000 families across Ontario**, guiding them through treatment at home, school and hospital.

POGO **Satellite Clinics** delivered **expert care in 6,500 visits**, allowing families to remain in their communities and stay connected to vital support networks.

Your donations helped POGO provide over **\$650,000** in financial support to over **780 families**, covering everyday costs beyond medical care.

“By optimizing services that can take place in community hospitals across Ontario, we are making the childhood cancer journey easier by bringing care closer to home for families.”

Dr. Charmaine van Schaik

Chief of Staff, Southlake Health; Vice-Chair, POGO Board of Directors

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE
POGO INTERLINK NURSE ROLE





FACING STAGE 4 CANCER AT JUST TWO MONTHS OLD

By Ruveena Mariathas

When Mallika was born, we thought she was just a fussy baby. She cried every night, and we took turns holding her upright while sleeping on the couch. Several visits to walk-in clinics indicated she had colic. But when she stopped having wet diapers and bowel movements, we knew it was something more serious.

At just two months old Mallika was diagnosed with stage 4 rhabdomyosarcoma. Her treatment began almost immediately—aggressive chemotherapy that had us constantly travelling to downtown Toronto, me with no income and bills piling up.

Our POGO Interlink Nurse connected us to POGO's Financial Assistance Program and handled the paperwork during a time when everything felt overwhelming. On her regular visits to our home, she always took time to check in on our older daughter, Ashwana, to make sure she was coping with her sister being sick and her parents being away so often at the hospital.

Eventually, we were able to move part of Mallika's care to the POGO Satellite Clinic at Scarborough Health Network. Being close to home meant we could sleep in our own beds, spend more time with Ashwana, and bring Mallika in for her daily chemotherapy without the added pressure of a long commute. The Satellite Clinic is a warm and welcoming environment and the nurses became like family—they knew her well, noticed small changes and helped us through some scary moments, including a serious episode of dehydration.

Mallika has had surgery to remove her bladder and now needs daily catheterization, which means we have to use a tube to keep her wounds from closing. When she turns five, doctors plan to create a neobladder—a surgically constructed bladder to help restore some normal function. Despite all she's faced, she's full of energy and steadily catching up on her milestones.

Mallika rang the bell at the clinic to mark the end of treatment. Our POGO nurse cried. We cried. After everything we'd been through, it felt like we could finally breathe.

SURVIVOR CARE

Many childhood cancer survivors face complications from the disease, surgery or intensive treatment. POGO AfterCare Clinics support them into adulthood through ongoing health monitoring. POGO Transitions Counsellors help survivors get the support they need to finish high school and move on to post-secondary and employment.

With your help, close to **550 young survivors** had the opportunity to access **1-1 counselling** to help them bridge high school to higher education or employment.

315 childhood cancer **survivors** **took their first step into long-term follow-up care** at a POGO AfterCare Clinic.

POGO added a Transitions Counsellor to support clients at our **new AfterCare Clinic in Sudbury.**

“ I am incredibly proud that TD Securities Underwriting Hope has supported POGO's School and Work Transitions Program for eight years. This initiative plays a vital role in empowering childhood cancer survivors, helping them navigate the path to education and meaningful employment. Knowing that our support helps young survivors achieve their goals and build bright futures is truly rewarding. POGO's commitment to supporting young patients, survivors and their families at every stage of the cancer journey is what makes their work so essential.”

Andrew G. Phillips
Deputy Chair, TD Securities

MEET THE POGO
TRANSITIONS TEAM



FIGHTING FOR MY FUTURE

By Angie Lee

My name is Angie Lee, and I am a three-time cancer survivor, two-time bone marrow transplant recipient, double lung transplant recipient and stroke survivor. I've been fighting for my life since I was 11 years old. More recently, I've also had to fight for my future. Thanks to the unwavering support of my POGO Transitions Counsellor, I achieved a dream that was nearly crushed: passing the GED test and earning my high school equivalency.

In 2008, I was a healthy, athletic kid when I was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Cancer took me out of school and away from my friends. After years of treatment and devastating complications (including pneumonia, pancreatitis, cataracts, gall bladder removal, graft-versus-host disease and avascular necrosis leading to a total hip replacement), finishing high school felt like a distant dream. But deep down, I wanted more than survival, I wanted to prove that I could still learn, grow and achieve the things I dreamed of. I set my sights on earning my GED before the program ended in Canada, and with the support of my POGO Transitions Counsellor, Sharon, I got to work.

Sharon encouraged me every step of the way. When I was turned away from a test centre and accused of using a fake ID—after months of preparation and travelling across Ontario to write the exams—I was devastated. I thought I'd lost my chance.

But Sharon didn't give up. She wrote a letter on hospital letterhead, advocated for me like family and found someone willing to listen. Just days before the GED program shut down, I was given one final chance to write—and I passed, with my highest score yet.

I was the last person in Canada to earn a GED.

This achievement is so much more than a piece of paper. It's proof that I am capable of rising above everything I've faced. I couldn't have done it without POGO. They believed in me when it mattered most.



GLOBAL REACH

POGO's impact extends beyond Ontario. Our registry data, research partnerships and clinical guidelines—endorsed by leading organizations like the Children's Oncology Group and the Multinational Association for Supportive Care in Cancer—are helping shape childhood cancer care globally and improve access to better treatment for children.

POGONIS* (POGO's Childhood Cancer Database) supported 40 requests for data to **drive system planning, policy development and research.**

POGO's work to advance childhood cancer care was shared around the world through **9 academic journal articles**, reaching healthcare leaders internationally.

POGO **contributed Ontario's childhood cancer data** to an **international study led by the World Health Organization**—supporting researchers around the world as they work to understand and prevent second cancers in survivors.

*Unmatched in the world, POGONIS contains nearly 40 years of population-based standardized and comprehensive data on demographic, diagnosis, treatment and outcomes of children with cancer in Ontario.

“ *POGO's Guidelines Program has transformed pediatric cancer care, setting a global benchmark for evidence-based supportive care. Their guidelines have catalyzed change internationally, guiding jurisdictions, institutions, and clinicians in evaluating and improving their supportive care practices. Thanks to POGO, children with cancer in Ontario and around the world are experiencing a better quality of life.* **”**

Dr. Lee Dupuis

Chair, POGO CINV guideline series; Clinical Pharmacist and Clinician Scientist, The Hospital for Sick Children

**POGO GUIDELINES SET THE
GOLD STANDARD**



HELPING KIDS FEEL BETTER DURING CANCER TREATMENT

How Supportive Care Guidelines Make a Difference

Cancer treatment saves lives, but it can also cause tough side effects—especially for children. In a Canadian study, 99% of hospitalized children receiving cancer treatment experienced at least one bothersome symptom and 60% experienced at least one severely bothersome symptom.¹ These symptoms are more than uncomfortable—they can interfere with a child's ability to eat, sleep and heal. In some cases, if side effects become too severe, cancer treatment itself may need to be delayed or adjusted, potentially leading to worse outcomes. That's why supportive care—the kind that helps patients manage the challenges of treatment—is so essential.

POGO's evidence-based guidelines for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CNIV), published in *Pediatric Blood & Cancer*, have changed the landscape of care in Ontario and have been adopted globally. Hospitals adapt these guidelines to make side effects less bothersome for children, making treatment journeys safer and less distressing.



"The POGO nausea and vomiting guideline suite has provided the basis of our national clinical guidelines since 2018 and prompted great discussion and development of treatment across the UK."

Bob Phillips, BMBCh, PhD, University of York/Hull-York Medical School, UK

Through POGO's leadership in supportive care, children are receiving therapy that not only treats their cancer but protects their well-being along the way. Thanks to the ongoing support of our community, POGO continues to be a trusted voice in improving childhood cancer care and minimizing the burden of treatment for every child.

¹Dupuis 2018; JNCI J Natl Cancer Inst.



ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE

Pediatric oncology is a rapidly advancing field. POGO leads the way in educating pediatric oncology professionals, ensuring healthcare teams stay at the top of their field.

More than **200 healthcare professionals** gathered for the 2024 **Multidisciplinary Symposium** on Childhood Cancer.

AfterCare Education Day drew **over 100 participants**, shaping the future of survivorship care.

More than **200 healthcare professionals** tuned into POGO's **expert-led education webinars** on critical childhood cancer topics.

“ *The POGO Symposium was an incredibly impactful, motivating and enriching experience for me as a medical trainee. It offered an invaluable opportunity to network with a variety of experts in the field including physicians, researchers, nurses and social workers who were all extremely dedicated to advancing pediatric oncology care from a multitude of perspectives. Engaging with these experts offered important insights on the diverse needs of children with cancer and the collaborative efforts required to meet them.* **”**

Alexa Moschella
POGO Symposium Bursary Recipient

**CHECK OUT POGO'S VIRTUAL
EDUCATION EVENTS**





DRIVING EXCELLENCE ACROSS THE CARE CONTINUUM

Every year, POGO's education events bring together healthcare professionals, researchers, patients, survivors and system leaders to share the latest evidence and best practices in childhood cancer care.

Our 2024 Symposium featured engaging panels, lived experience storytelling and the latest in survivorship and clinical research. POGO AfterCare Education Day deepened knowledge around long-term effects of childhood cancer and support strategies. One of our clinical practice guidelines published this year was featured in a webinar attended by 169 participants from 31 countries. And the POGO Nursing Committee led three standout webinars addressing fatigue in young people with cancer; sleep disruptions in pediatric acute lymphoblastic leukemia; and the unique needs of adolescents and young adults navigating cancer.



WITH GRATITUDE

Our sincerest gratitude to our donors for their dedication to championing kids' cancer care. A special thank you to those who have committed to POGO with a multi-year agreement, indicated below with an asterisk*.

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PUMA Toronto Women's Run Series

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Branksome Hall - So You Think You Clan Dance
Google Canada Giving Week

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Factory Shoe Kitchener Fundraiser
Kitchener Rangers - Clarky's Kids

\$5,000- \$9,999

Golden Warriors Yoga
LIVEWELL Swing Against Cancer - For Kids
Rangers Reach - Kitchener Rangers Community Fund

\$1,000 - \$4,999

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Mount Forest Lions Club Dance for the Cure
Narwhal Boutique Fundraiser
Ottawa Corporate Cup
Rockwood & District Lions Club
The Sweetest Thing Fundraiser
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Tri Delta Toronto Alumnae
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Tournament

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Via Pilates Fundraiser
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RESPONDING TO EVOLVING NEEDS

At the heart of our work is a model that's unique in the pediatric cancer care system—one that blends the stability of government collaboration with the power of donor generosity. As a nonprofit with charitable status, we are trusted by government to offer expert guidance on childhood cancer care. Donor support fuels our ability to act quickly, fill urgent gaps and deliver critical programs—ranging from research and education initiatives to wraparound programs like financial assistance and survivorship care. Whether funding comes from public or private sources, it ensures that children with cancer and their families receive the comprehensive support they need, when they need it most.

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FIND OUT MORE ABOUT POGO'S ROLE IN THE CHILDHOOD CANCER SYSTEM



THANK YOU!

Your support means children and youth with cancer, survivors and their families are cared for. Every step of the way.

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