



2026
**A YEAR OF
IMPACT**

POGO
PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY GROUP OF ONTARIO

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 School & Work Transitions Counsellors support survivors as they transition to further school or work (8)



POGO Adolescent & Young Adult (AYA) Cancer Program (ages 15-39) addresses unique and specialized needs at a pivotal life stage (8)

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO & MEDICAL DIRECTOR

POGO is the leader of Ontario's childhood cancer care system. Together with committed partners, we are ensuring that children and families across Ontario are supported with expert, compassionate care at every stage of their cancer journey, from diagnosis through treatment, survivorship, and when needed, end-of-life care.

This past year, POGO drove meaningful progress across the province. More children received care closer to home through POGO Satellite Clinics and within their community from their POGO Interlink Nurses. More families accessed financial support when they needed it most. And more survivors were connected to lifelong follow-up care through POGO AfterCare Clinics, helping them manage their long-term health with confidence.

These priorities align with Ontario's Childhood Cancer Care Plan (2024-2029), our roadmap shaped by families, survivors, clinicians, and partners across the system. The plan sets a clear path to improve care and outcomes for years to come.

With our partners, we are turning our mission into action.

We are strengthening supports for adolescents and young adults, creating opportunities for emerging researchers to turn evidence into better care, and expanding pediatric palliative care in Northern communities. We are growing investment in psychosocial support within POGO Satellite and AfterCare Clinics. We are implementing new clinical tools to advance symptom management and survivorship care. And we are bringing together leaders to share knowledge and learn from one another, creating a shared collaborative space to ensure that evidence and ideas are scaled across the province.

These are not just programs; these are real advancements in how quality care is conceived and delivered: more connected, more equitable, and more responsive to what children and families truly need.

Looking ahead, we are building on this momentum. We remain committed to ensuring that every child, youth, and survivor has access to timely, accessible, and appropriate care. The care each child and family needs, where and when they need it.

We are deeply grateful to the Government of Ontario for its continued commitment to ensuring children receive the right care at the right time and in the right place, support that makes it possible for our work to grow and reach families in communities across the province. We also extend our sincere thanks to our donors, whose ongoing support helps advance POGO's mission. Lastly, thank you to our partners across the province who are integral to everything we do.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lauren Ettin".

Lauren Ettin
CEO



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donna Johnston".

Donna Johnston
Medical Director;
POGO Chair in Childhood Cancer Control
at the University of Ottawa

POGO Interlink Nurses

supported children and families through **2000+ school, home, and community visits**, helping kids stay connected to school and daily life through treatment, recovery, and **care beyond hospital walls**.

POGO Satellite Clinics

supported **over 6,500 visits** across the province. Local care. Fewer long trips. **More time at home.**

POGO distributed nearly **\$740,000 to 780+ families**, covering out-of-pocket costs incurred during treatment.

FAMILY-CENTERED SUPPORT

POGO offers wraparound support during treatment, including the POGO Interlink Nursing Program (expert nursing in hospital, school, home, and community), POGO Satellite Clinics (care closer to home), and the POGO Financial Assistance Program (financial support for families).



"I can't overstate how valuable the POGO Interlink Nursing Program has been to our family, especially in creating a safe, well-informed, and compassionate environment for James as he returned to school. And your financial support for accommodations and everyday costs eased a major burden, giving our family real peace of mind during treatment."

***Adam**, Parent of James
(pictured here and on the cover with his POGO Interlink Nurse, Emily)*

CLOSER TO HOME: THE DIFFERENCE LOCAL CARE MAKES

By Leanna O'Keefe

For childhood cancer patients and their families in northwest Ontario, a diagnosis can mean travelling over 14 hours each way to Children's Hospital at London Health Sciences Centre—again and again, through treatment that can last years. POGO expanded the POGO Satellite and Interlink Nursing programs to Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, bringing aspects of childhood cancer care closer to home and easing some of the financial burden of travelling to a major city centre.

As a family, we are extremely grateful to have a POGO Satellite Clinic in Thunder Bay. Having this medical team and support available locally has been such a comfort while navigating our daughter Lauren's cancer journey, especially living so far from other major cities.

Knowing the POGO Satellite Clinic was nearby and that we had a direct access point to care through our POGO Interlink Nurse, Nicole, we felt an enormous amount of stress lifted from our shoulders. It meant better medical care for Lauren closer to home, so we weren't facing the same pressure to travel. Taking time off work and



watching Lauren miss so much school had been really hard on our family, and the Satellite Clinic made day-to-day life more manageable.

It was such a relief to complete many of her appointments in town and be able to reach Nicole any time we had a concern. We trusted that she would follow up quickly, and her consistent contact with Lauren's oncology team in London

gave us real peace of mind that her care was seamless, no matter where we were. Between the reduced travel and the POGO Financial Assistance Program, the financial weight on our family was much lighter.

Without POGO, Lauren's cancer journey would have been much harder on all of us, mentally and financially. We truly cannot put into words what POGO has meant to our family.

"It has been such a comfort to have this medical team and support available to us locally while dealing with our daughter's cancer journey."

SURVIVOR CARE

While over 85% of children diagnosed with cancer in Ontario will survive, four in five will get a secondary cancer or have other health impacts due to their cancer and/or its treatment. That's why POGO AfterCare Clinics support survivors into adulthood through ongoing health monitoring. Beyond physical health, POGO School and Work Transitions Counsellors help survivors get the support they need to reach their educational and employment goals.



"Survivorship support needs to go beyond treatment to include the physical, emotional, and social issues that come up later in life. POGO supported my school and work transition, and I attended events to learn about relationships after cancer, fertility, and life beyond treatment. When I felt lost, that mix of information and community support was invaluable."

Paul, Childhood cancer survivor

POGO AfterCare Clinics had more than **5,000 enrolled survivors**, delivering **specialized care** tailored to the lifelong complexities of life after cancer.

Over 530 clients received **customized support** from **POGO School and Work Transitions Counsellors**.

90% of clients said they would **recommend** the **POGO School and Work Transitions Program** to other survivors.

BUILDING MY LIFE AROUND AN ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

By Hugh Maw

I've had three brain tumours. The first was diagnosed when I was four. Three surgeries, 33 rounds of radiation, and a year of chemotherapy later, I was cancer-free, but treatment left me with only 5% recall and slow processing speed, both of which are still part of my daily life.

What might take someone an hour takes me three or four. In the early years, I'd forget plans with friends entirely. They'd call to ask where I was and I'd have no idea what they were talking about. I've had to build systems just to function: writing everything down, setting constant reminders, relying on repetition, and depending on the people around me to fill in the gaps.

A couple of years ago, a second tumour appeared, requiring another surgery. This time I wasn't a little kid. I understood what was happening, and that came with a new kind of weight: a responsibility to be more involved in the treatment decisions. THAT was scary.

In 2023, I met Helen, my POGO School and Work Transitions Counsellor. She helped me figure out how to advocate for myself and ask for the accommodations I need, like extra time

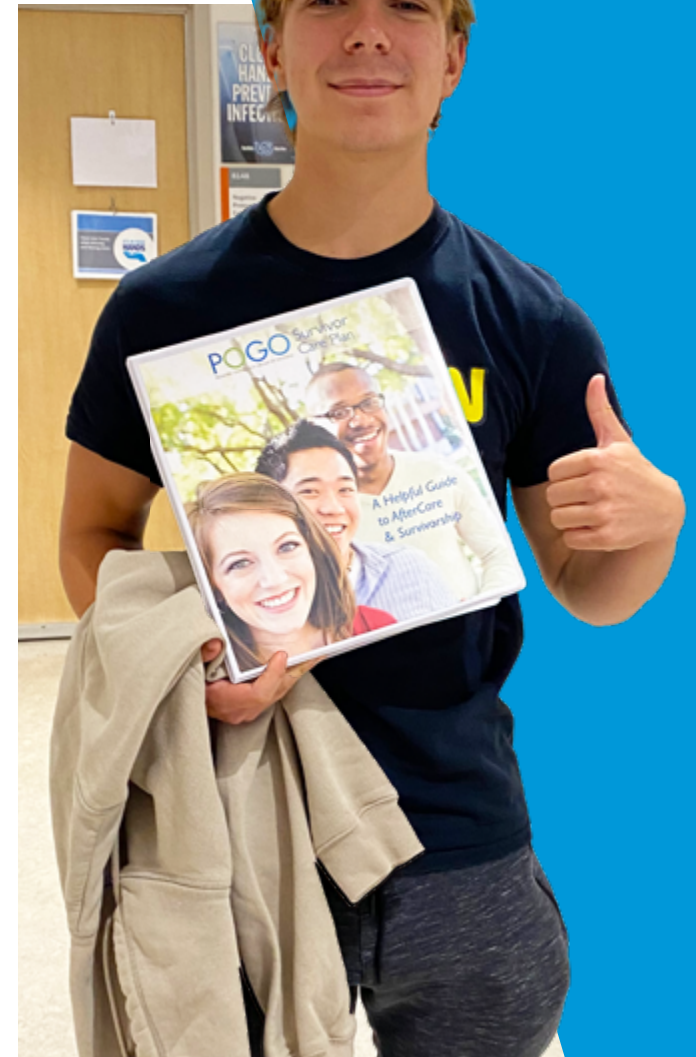
on tests, access to lecture notes, and flexible course loads. When applying to universities, she helped me explain how my needs don't quite fit the standard boxes. I owe a part of my academic success to her.

What really stands out is how patient Helen was, especially at the beginning. She reached out repeatedly to check in and offer help, even though I would consistently forget who she was. It took a few tries, but we built a strong relationship, and she continues to be a tremendous support and advocate.

After I turned 18, my care transferred from SickKids to the POGO AfterCare Clinic at Princess Margaret. It was a tough transition, but it is reassuring to know the team has all my health information and will monitor me for late effects for the rest of my life.

One week before I was moving away to university, I was diagnosed with a third tumour. I am taking a lighter course load at Wilfrid Laurier University as an accommodation to support my late effects. I have come to understand what I need to be successful, and I know POGO will be there.

"Helen, my POGO School and Work Transitions Counsellor, has been there for the moments that come *after* treatment, the part people forget about."



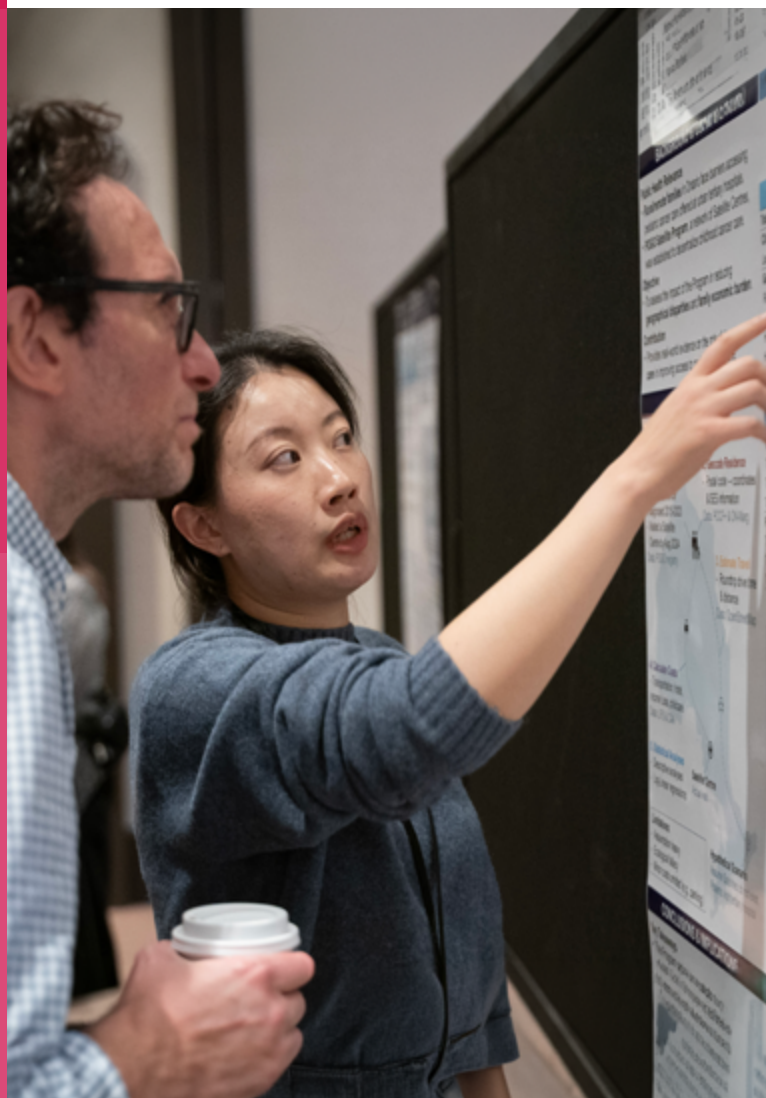
POGO strengthened care for children with cancer through **six influential publications** that help guide and **improve how symptoms, side effects, and overall wellbeing are managed**, earning international endorsements and two journal awards for impact.

Supported **six research and quality improvement grants**, driving discoveries that will help **more children with cancer get the best care possible**.

POGO guidelines, such as those for fatigue and nausea/vomiting, two common and distressing symptoms, are now being implemented at sites across Canada, the US, and Europe, **bringing evidence-based care to children with cancer around the world!**

ADVANCING EVIDENCE-BASED CARE

POGO's leadership in drug access, development of clinical guidelines, and support for research are strengthening the evidence base that shapes childhood cancer care, in Ontario, across Canada, and globally.



POGO led the submission process for two high-cost oncology medications: working with partners to secure upfront funding for blinatumomab as a frontline treatment for B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (the most common pediatric cancer); and co-sponsoring the Canadian Drug Agency review of brentuximab vedotin for children under 12 with high-risk Hodgkin lymphoma—expanding treatment options for a population with limited alternatives.

THE POGO TRAINEE FUNDING GRANT

The new POGO Trainee Funding Grant bridges a critical funding gap for emerging researchers, empowering the next generation of pediatric oncology scientists to launch meaningful careers in childhood cancer research.

The first POGO Trainee Funding Grant was awarded to support research into how parents of children with leukemia make decisions about emerging therapies.

“Newer antibody therapies offer the hope of replacing some chemotherapy and reducing its side effects, but asking a parent to choose less chemotherapy for their child is a profound decision. I want to understand what shapes that choice, so we can design better clinical trials and, as clinicians, better support the families facing them.”

There is no dedicated funding for students pursuing a career in childhood cancer research. This grant means more to me than covering costs. It signals that the question I’m asking is relevant and worth pursuing. It’s a meaningful start to my career.”

POGO funds research that advances the goals of Ontario’s 2024–2029 Childhood Cancer Care Plan. Recent projects span key themes, including palliative care, symptom screening, psychosocial care, survivor health and late effects, financial hardship, and access to emerging therapies.



Rachel Hamilton
Registered Nurse;
PhD candidate;
First POGO Trainee
Funding Grant
recipient

IMPROVING QUALITY CARE

POGO programs and services for adolescents and young adults (AYA) and the expansion of psychosocial supports are helping ensure that every young person with cancer receives care that meets their full range of needs: physical, emotional, and social.

BUILDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT INTO EVERY STAGE OF CARE

Children, survivors, and their families face a range of needs due to the emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual impacts that go beyond the medical aspects of cancer care. POGO is investing in psychosocial support within its partner hospitals and the broader community and bringing together interprofessional teams from children's hospitals and POGO Satellite Clinics to share learnings and ensure coordination and integration of care.

At POGO Satellite Clinics, families now have access to a dedicated social worker and/or child life specialist as part of the local healthcare team. These trained professionals provide support throughout treatment and beyond and enhance the wraparound care families receive throughout the cancer journey.

POGO AfterCare Clinics extend support beyond treatment by embedding psychosocial care into survivorship,

including social workers and School and Work Transitions Counsellors within the care team. These counsellors work with educators, community organizations, and employers to help survivors navigate academic and career decisions and put accommodations in place to succeed.

POGO has heard from families that caregivers need support after treatment ends. In partnership with Gilda's Toronto, a new program has been established that offers parents a confidential, professionally facilitated space to talk through the emotional and relational complexities of life after their child's treatment, including identity after treatment, lingering grief and fear, shifts in family dynamics, and ongoing uncertainty.

By embedding psychosocial expertise directly into clinical and community settings, POGO is advancing a model of care where emotional and social support are integral to every stage of the cancer journey.



“The AYA program began with a simple but persistent idea to create something built for young people in a cancer system that wasn’t originally designed with their cancer needs in mind. Thank you to POGO for not only supporting, promoting, and funding our program, but for being a relentless force for advancing targeted AYA care across the province.”



CLOSING THE GAP FOR ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG ADULTS WITH CANCER

POGO is leading a province wide effort to improve access to age-appropriate care for adolescents and young adults (AYA) with cancer, in collaboration with two new and six existing partner hospitals across Ontario.

Many AYA patients are at a pivotal stage in their lives, often finishing school, starting careers, buying homes, and building families. A cancer diagnosis during this time can have far reaching effects on education, employment, mental health, fertility, relationships, and long-term well-being—creating care needs that differ from those of children or older adults. The POGO AYA Cancer Program is supporting hospitals across Ontario to build coordinated AYA care that reflects these realities. The approach focuses on three priority areas that have been historically under addressed for AYA patients: mental health, fertility, and sexual health.

Interdisciplinary hospital teams are connected in a POGO Community of Practice, which allows for the sharing of tools, lessons learned, and models of care.

AYA teams step in early, often at diagnosis, providing tailored support that improves quality of life and long-term survivorship outcomes.

The POGO AYA Cancer Program includes a dedicated POGO School and Work Transitions Counsellor providing support navigating school and work expectations while managing treatment, recovery, and the long-term effects of cancer.

Dr. Alisha Kassam
*Founder & Medical Lead of the AYA Program
at Southlake Health’s Regional Cancer Centre;
Winner of the 2025 POGO Visionary Award*



INNOVATIVE TOOLS

Innovative tools are transforming childhood cancer care, putting real-time information directly into the hands of patients, survivors, and clinicians. POGO is leading the adoption of new technologies that improve symptom monitoring during treatment and lifelong health management in survivorship.

Giving Young People a Voice in Their Own Cancer Care

Cancer and its treatment are hard on children and adolescents. Symptoms like nausea, pain, fatigue, and anxiety can be frequent, unpredictable, and severe, and when they go unnoticed or unreported, they build, making treatment harder to get through and recovery slower. The people who know best how a child is feeling are the children themselves. Now there is a quick and reliable way to convey how they are feeling to their healthcare team.

POGO supported the early development of SSPedi (Symptom Screening in Pediatrics Tool), a validated, internationally endorsed tool that gives children and adolescents a simple way to report their own symptoms. A caregiver version for younger children is available. POGO is leading the rollout of SSPedi across Ontario, ensuring children's symptoms are regularly tracked and acted on. Evidence shows that this approach leads to better symptom control, more targeted interventions, and an improved patient experience.

PUTTING SURVIVORSHIP INFORMATION IN SURVIVORS' HANDS

More than 23,000 individuals in Ontario have survived childhood cancer, and nearly 80% will face at least one serious long-term health effect. Because every survivor's experience is different, follow-up care needs to be personalized. Until now, though, these care plans were often paper based, manually updated, and not easy to access.

POGO is modernizing childhood cancer survivorship care in Ontario by implementing Passport for Care, a mobile app that gives survivors access to their personal health information.

Passport for Care automatically generates individualized, evidence-based care plans, based on each survivor's health history, moving beyond paper binders for good. Integrating with POGONIS (POGO's childhood cancer registry), enables secure, seamless data flow, helping ensure care plans remain accurate and up to date. For survivors and their care teams, this means having essential health information at their fingertips, accessible anytime and anywhere through a mobile app.

Ontario is the first jurisdiction in the world to roll out Passport for Care across all survivor clinics, with fully automated data integration. It's a major step forward in making survivorship care more connected, more accessible, and better aligned with the realities of life after cancer.

"Passport for Care provides survivors, regardless of where they live or receive care, with a single, invaluable tool to understand their treatment, long-term risks, and recommended follow-up, empowering them to optimize their long-term health and quality of life."

Dr. Paul Nathan, AfterCare Medical Director, POGO AfterCare Clinic Program





ADVANCING KNOWLEDGE AND BUILDING CAPACITY

The field of pediatric oncology is advancing rapidly. Frontline teams and leaders need to stay informed about emerging advances in care, learn from interprofessional peers, and continuously evolve their practice so children and families have the best possible outcomes. POGO is a leader in educating pediatric oncology professionals, ensuring healthcare teams stay at the top of their field.

Connecting Expertise Across Ontario

Strengthening Pediatric Palliative Cancer Care Expertise in Northern Ontario. POGO worked to bring specialized pediatric palliative cancer care closer to home in Northern Ontario, training healthcare providers, building local expertise, and reducing the need for families to travel during end-of-life care. A growing network of trained clinicians now has the knowledge and confidence to deliver compassionate, coordinated care within their own communities, helping families stay where they feel most supported when it matters most.

Scaling Expertise through Communities of Practice. Building local expertise extends across the province through POGO's five Communities of Practice. These groups bring together leaders with different perspectives and experiences, including dietitians, AYA and psychosocial providers, and tertiary hospital directors and clinical leads, so they can learn from one another. By creating a shared space for knowledge exchange, they accelerate innovation, strengthen connections and collaboration, and support continuous improvement in patient care. The result is that good ideas don't stay local; they are adapted and scaled, amplifying their impact for patients and families everywhere.

Across **5 virtual and in-person educational events**, POGO reached **over 800 participants**, **strengthening** childhood cancer **knowledge and best practices** province-wide.



THANK YOU!

With gratitude to our partners and funders across the province who make this work possible, POGO remains committed to leading a childhood cancer care system that supports children, youth, their families, survivors of childhood cancer, and adolescents and young adults with cancer at every stage of the journey. In the year ahead, we will continue to strengthen care across the province, responding to the evolving needs of those we serve.



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PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY GROUP OF ONTARIO

**FOR KIDS WITH CANCER
FOR NOW, FOR LIFE.**

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

