

Magazica



Issue May 2025

Health

Hope, Happiness

**Wellness Tourism in
Canada: The Rise of
Restorative Travel**

THE NEW ERA OF RHINOPLASTY:

**What Patients
Need to Know**

**Wellness in the
Workplace: How
Canadian
Employers Are
Prioritizing Mental
Fitness**

**Nutrition Trends
in Canada: From
Plant-Based to
Personalized
Diets**

**An Inspiring
Conversation on
How Storytelling
and Purpose
Driven
Philanthropy Lead
to a Fulfilling
Career**

LIANNE LAINING

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Magazica

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Wellness Tourism in Canada:

The Rise of Restorative Travel

By Editorial Team

In recent years, Canada has emerged as a premier destination for wellness tourism, attracting travelers seeking rejuvenation amidst its vast natural landscapes. From the serene forests of British Columbia to the historic charm of Québec City, the country offers a diverse array of experiences that cater to the growing demand for restorative travel.

One notable trend is the rise of "coolcations," where travelers opt for cooler climates to escape extreme heat. Canada, with its temperate summers and abundant natural beauty, has become a favored destination for such retreats. Vancouver Island, for instance, offers carbon-neutral orca whale-watching experiences and eco-friendly accommodations like Clayoquot Wilderness Lodge,

which operates almost entirely on solar energy.

The country's wellness retreats are as varied as its landscapes. Nectar Yoga Retreat on Bowen Island provides guests with daily meditation and movement classes in a tranquil setting, complemented by plant-based meals made from locally sourced ingredients. Le Monastère des Augustines in Québec City, a historic convent turned wellness hotel, offers mindfulness programs and silent breakfasts, emphasizing sustainable practices and spiritual well-being.

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For those seeking deeper spiritual experiences, Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia offers Buddhist monastic retreats, allowing participants to immerse themselves in contemplative practices amidst the serene backdrop of Cape Breton Island. Similarly, Loyola House in Guelph, Ontario, provides Ignatian spiritual retreats, focusing on personal reflection and spiritual growth.

The appeal of wellness tourism in Canada lies not only in its offerings but also in its alignment with broader travel trends.



Travelers are increasingly seeking experiences that prioritize mental, emotional, and physical well-being. This shift is evident in the growing popularity of retreats that combine nature immersion with wellness practices, such as forest bathing, yoga, and meditation.

Moreover, the country's commitment to sustainability enhances its allure. Many wellness destinations in Canada emphasize eco-friendly practices, from using renewable energy sources to offering locally sourced, organic meals. This focus on environmental responsibility resonates with travelers who are conscious of their ecological footprint.

As the global wellness tourism market continues to expand, Canada's diverse landscapes, cultural richness, and dedication to holistic well-being position it as a leading destination for restorative travel. Whether it's a silent retreat in a historic monastery, a yoga session overlooking a tranquil lake, or a mindful walk through ancient forests, Canada offers myriad opportunities for travelers to reconnect with themselves and nature.

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Nature as Medicine:

How Canadians Are Turning to the Outdoors to Heal

By Editorial Team

As digital devices take over people's lives and concrete structures replace green spaces, many Canadians seek refuge in nature's organic embrace. The belief that outdoor activities such as forest walks or urban park lunches enhance mental health goes beyond romantic ideas because scientific research supports this wellness trend which doctors and cities throughout the country now adopt.

Nature-based therapy known as eco-therapy includes multiple practices which use the healing power of natural surroundings to benefit people.

Studies show that outdoor activities such as forest bathing and hiking as well as gardening or tree sitting serve as validated methods for stress and anxiety reduction and depression management. Environmental Research published findings in 2024 which demonstrated that forest therapy and related methods effectively enhanced emotional health while reducing psychological suffering among participants which supports the intuitive belief that nature possesses healing qualities (Environmental Research, 2024).

The expanding acknowledgment of nature's therapeutic benefits has led to innovative initiatives such as PaRx which serves as Canada's inaugural national program prescribing nature-based activities.

The BC Parks Foundation initiated a program which enables licensed healthcare professionals to prescribe outdoor time with a standard recommendation of two hours weekly spent outside in at least 20-minute periods. Patients who obtain a PaRx prescription become eligible for a complimentary annual Parks Canada Discovery Pass which grants them entry to more than 80 national parks and historic sites. According to Dr. Melissa Lem from Vancouver who serves as both a family physician and director of PaRx the scientific data confirms that nature functions as an effective and freely available resource to enhance our well-being (PaRx 2024; NPR 2022).

The healing power of nature serves as an ancient practice for many communities, particularly Indigenous peoples. People recognized the land as a source of strength, identity, and balance long before eco-therapy became a popular term. Indigenous-led healing programs throughout Canada are reconnecting people with their traditional territories by using cultural practices such as ceremonial gatherings, medicine walks and storytelling. The Egowadiya'dagenha' Program at Six Nations of the Grand River in Ontario serves as one example of these initiatives. Its name, meaning "they will be helping," reflects its mission: Six Nations Health Services (2023) shows how Indigenous knowledge systems connect participants to their mental well-being by establishing their relationship with the land.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly sped up people's movement back towards nature. During lockdowns that forced people to stay inside while anxiety levels rose many Canadians discovered comfort through outdoor activities. People used trails, green spaces and community gardens as places to both get exercise and achieve mental clarity. The importance of spending time outdoors has stayed essential even though daily life has regained its regular flow.

Canadians are adapting their way of living to incorporate natural elements because nature serves as more than recreational space—it strengthens resilience.

Public health officials along with urban planners observed these lifestyle changes. A trend exists in Canadian cities to incorporate additional green spaces into urban development. Modern urban developments now recognize rooftop gardens and tree-lined bike paths along with upgraded public parks as essential components of public health infrastructure beyond their visual appeal. A Nature Humanities and Social Sciences Communications 2024 study revealed lower psychological distress levels among residents near green spaces even in densely populated areas showing mental health advantages from accessible nature especially for underprivileged communities.

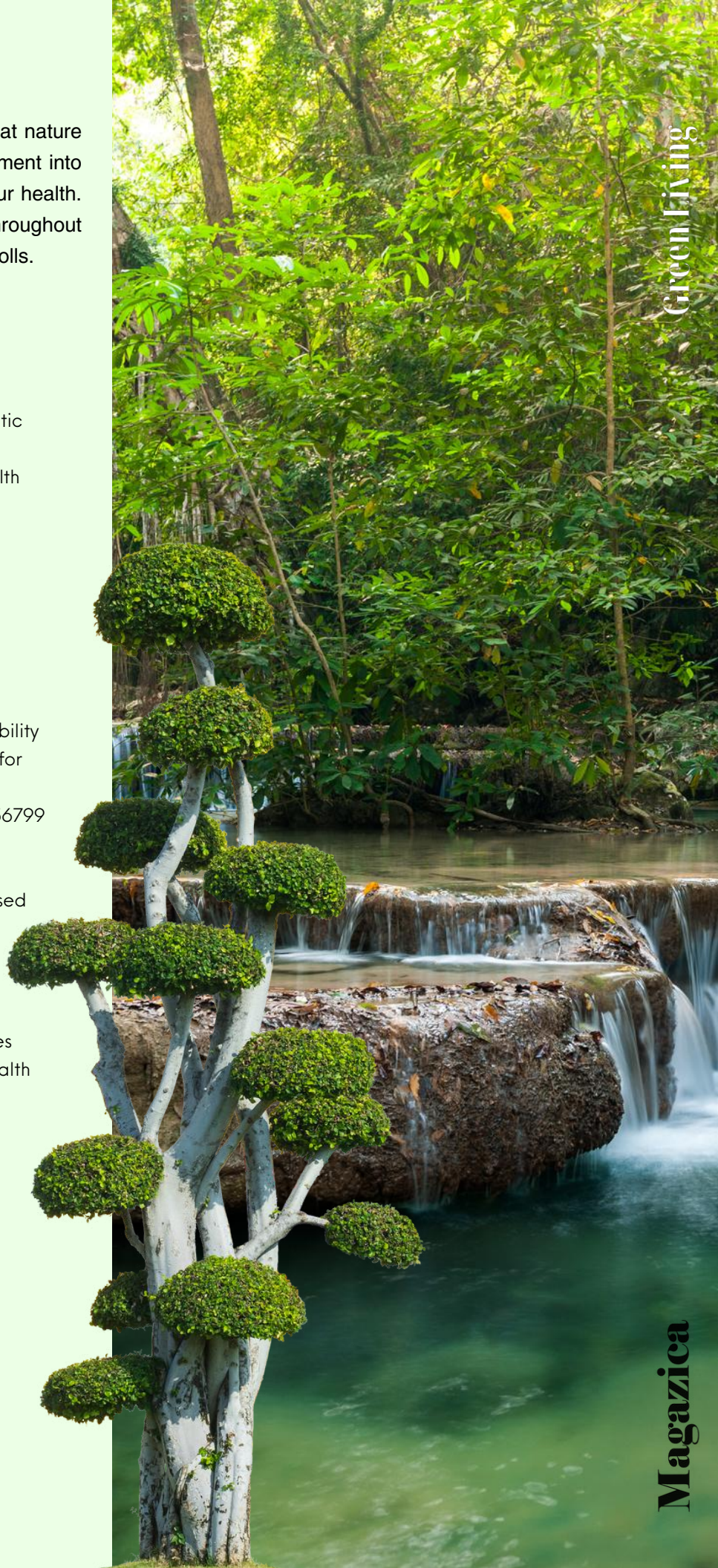
The wellness industry is now adopting this growing trend. Eco-retreats along with outdoor wellness programs and nature therapy guides experience rapid growth throughout Canada. People seeking wellness are choosing to visit locations like Quebec's thermal baths and the Rocky Mountains' yoga retreats to find relaxation through natural land connections. Influencers on social media are advocating for more time spent outdoors rather than on screens while encouraging followers to disconnect digitally and experience nature.

You can embrace this wellness shift without traveling long distances or making financial investments. Walking through a park or gardening on a balcony and sitting quietly outdoors each produce significant mood and stress level improvements. It's about mindfulness, intention, and presence—not perfection.

The current wellness movement shows that nature has evolved from a mere background element into an essential component for maintaining our health. Better mental well-being for people throughout Canada could start with simple outdoor strolls.

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Interview

*With the
President of the
Ottawa Heart
Institute
Foundation*

*Lianne
Laing*



With a distinguished background in broadcast television, Lianne Laing has made a significant transition to leading strategic philanthropy in the non-profit sector. Now President of the Ottawa Heart Institute Foundation, she applies her considerable skills, particularly in storytelling, to advance critical heart health initiatives. Driven by a personal connection to the cause, her focus is on raising vital funds and empowering individuals with life-saving knowledge to prevent heart disease. Her leadership embodies purpose and impact, harnessing communication to drive meaningful change.



Lianne Laing:

An Inspiring Conversation on How Storytelling and Purpose-Driven Philanthropy Lead to a Fulfilling Career

She spent two decades under the bright lights of broadcast television, living a fast-paced, sleep-deprived life. But a personal health scare—shingles in her early forties—and the devastating loss of her father to a heart attack became the undeniable wake-up calls. Lianne Laing listened. She took a terrifying leap of faith, jumping off a cliff with no parachute, guided by a gut feeling and a passion for health. Now, as President of the Ottawa Heart Institute Foundation, she harnesses the power of storytelling not just for fundraising, but to equip people with life-saving knowledge. This is a journey about transformation, purpose, and the profound impact one person can have by aligning skill set with passion.

Magazica: Dear readers and viewers, today we have with us a remarkable individual who has seamlessly transitioned from the dynamic world of broadcast television to a position of profound impact in the health sector. Lianne Laing spent two decades connecting with audiences through sports and morning television. Now, as the President of the Ottawa Heart Institute Foundation and Vice President of Philanthropy, she brings the same passion and connection to advancing cardiac care. Lianne's journey is a testament to the power of purpose and the drive to make a meaningful difference.

Lianne, welcome to Magazica.

Lianne Laing: Thank you. That's quite the introduction—I feel very privileged.

Magazica: You had a successful 20-year career in broadcast television. What sparked your search for new adventures, better sleep, and the chance to pursue passion projects that ultimately led you to the Ottawa Heart Institute Foundation?

Lianne Laing: It was a very different journey, but I'm so happy that my experiences collided the way they did. I spent 20 years working in television, the last ten of which I hosted a morning show. That meant a 3:30 AM wake-up call while raising two young kids—a fast-paced, sleep-deprived lifestyle.

“

MY BODY'S WAY OF SAYING 'WAKE UP!' WAS A PIVOTAL MOMENT.

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In June 2017, I came down with shingles, which isn't something you expect in your early forties. It was my body's red flag, a warning sign that something needed to change. I listened. As I reflected, I realized my mind had already checked out—I had done my 20 years, reached as far as I was going to go, but I was stuck in Groundhog Day. My body's way of saying "Wake up!" was a pivotal moment.

I simply couldn't continue the cycle of waking up at 3:30 AM, working full days, parenting, managing competitive sports at night, going to bed at 10 PM, and repeating it indefinitely.

That was my turning point—I recognized my body was exhausted, and I wanted the opportunity to build a second career. At 42, I had energy, passion, and the ability to rebrand, relearn, and use my skills in a different way.

So I left television, jumping off a cliff with no parachute. I had no idea what was next, just a gut feeling that there was more out there for me. The one certainty I had was my love for health and wellness—it had always been a theme in the interviews I conducted over the years. I loved talking to doctors, nutritionists, and health experts, so I knew that whatever I pursued next, it would have to incorporate that passion. A few years later, the Ottawa Heart Institute opportunity landed on my doorstep, and everything aligned.

Magazica: It's great that you listened to that wake-up call, recognizing the signs your body was giving you. It was a leap of faith, and clearly a transformative one.

Lianne Laing: Absolutely—it was a terrifying leap of faith. I remember pacing my house at 2 AM, asking myself if I was truly ready to leave the only career I had ever known. It led to a lot of sleepless nights.

Once you make the decision, though, you have to trust in your skill set and work ethic. I knew I had the discipline—I had been an athlete all my life, and that meant being coachable, pushing myself, and embracing challenges. Those qualities helped me realize I could start fresh and succeed.

Many people get scared, second-guess themselves, and retreat to what's familiar, but staying stuck leads to regret. I didn't want to regret staying only to be laid off later. Television has changed drastically from when I started, and I knew I had to evolve.

Magazica: Speaking of your athletic background, what was your sport?

Lianne Laing: I was a gymnast from the age of six until 22. I competed for Canada at an elite level and eventually earned a scholarship to the U.S. That's where I completed my university education before retiring from competition.

Magazica: Fantastic. Now, shifting back to your media experience—your podcast, *Living Your Life* with Lianne Laing, focused strongly on health, wellness, and lifestyle. How did your years in media shape your understanding of those topics and their importance for everyday people?

Lianne Laing: The first ten years of my television career were dedicated to sports. I was a sports anchor, covering professional athletes—Ottawa Senators, Ottawa Redblacks, Renegades, CFL, and more. I was deeply passionate about that world.

When I transitioned to the morning show, I wanted to bring my background into it, so I created a segment called *Today's The Day*. It was a two-minute daily feature highlighting one actionable step to improve your life—whether for better health, longevity, or well-being. Each day featured different experts—a doctor, a nutritionist, a chiropractor, or a sports psychologist. Some tips were as simple as taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

I truly loved that part of the show. But the challenge in television, especially in sports reporting, is time constraints—the stories are short. Sports stories were only 90 seconds, and morning show segments maxed out at three-and-a-half to four minutes. Many of the incredible guests I interviewed had so much more to offer than a snippet.

When I left television, I remembered all my favorite guests—those whose knowledge and expertise couldn't fit into a short segment. That realization led to the creation of my podcast, *Living Your Life* with Lianne Laing. It provided a long-form platform where guests could dive deeper—sometimes for an hour, even an hour and a half—into topics people cared about.

I often sat on set thinking, I could do so much more. I could help people better if we had more time. That's why I started the podcast when I left television.

Magazica: Oh, fantastic! Now, your current role allows you to apply your communication and storytelling skills in new ways.

Could you share how you leverage those skills to connect with donors and raise awareness for the Ottawa Heart Institute's crucial work?

Lianne Laing: That's a great question. When the Heart Institute Foundation reached out to me—through a headhunter—I initially said no. My first instinct was, I'm not a fundraiser. I don't want to ask people for money.

Having emceed hundreds of charity events and worked with every nonprofit in Ottawa, fundraising never personally appealed to me. So I turned down the offer. But later, I told my husband about the call, thinking it was a strange request.

He responded, You are so passionate about health and wellness. You know how to tell stories, and you understand the deeper narratives behind them. That changed my perspective.

I lost my dad to a heart attack two weeks before my wedding. Heart disease became personal. Now, I understand the role of family genetics and risk factors.

I often wonder how many daughters still have their fathers walking them down the aisle—because they had the necessary preventative measures, recognized their symptoms, and sought treatment in time.

Looking back, I now recognize the warning signs my father missed. He passed away while golfing with my soon-to-be husband. Afterward, when sorting through his belongings, I found Pepto-Bismol, antacids—he had assumed his symptoms were just indigestion. In reality, they were red flags.

That realization became my pivotal turning point. I reframed the role into something more impactful—I would focus on storytelling, connection, prevention, and wellness rather than traditional fundraising. My goal became ensuring people never have to turn to the Heart Institute for treatment, because they've been equipped with the information to prevent heart disease in the first place.

I accomplish that through storytelling, collaborations, and education, usually without direct fundraising asks.

Once I said yes to the head-hunter and entered the role, I knew storytelling and collaborations would be the key. People connect when they see themselves in real stories. After 20 years of telling stories on television, I realized how powerful that skill would be in this new role.

And honestly, it worked. If you build something with authenticity, people will engage.

Storytelling isn't just about fundraising—it applies to any business. Whether selling a product or offering a service, the narrative is what connects people to the mission, the solution, and the impact.

Magazica: Your father would be very proud, and he is watching over you.

Lianne Laing: Honestly, that is the biggest factor in why this job is so important.



I don't think I could be doing this for anyone else—it is so closely tied to who I am. Having lost him so young, I feel like I should have known better. I don't want anyone else to go through that.

Now, when I see people coming through—especially the storytelling around women's heart health—I recognize how under-researched, underdiagnosed, and undertreated we are as women. We started an event called "Jump In for Women's Heart Health" to educate women about how our risk factors and symptoms differ.

If you've had complications during pregnancy—preeclampsia, low birth weight—there are factors that affect women that haven't been widely discussed. By sharing our stories and bringing this information forward, we are saving lives and raising awareness in a different way. For me, it's all about the stories.

Magazica: And we'll touch a bit on that. Is it, in part, because women tend to focus on caring for others that they ignore their own health?

Lianne Laing: Oh, absolutely. We've heard stories of women who drove themselves to the hospital while having a heart attack—but only after they had finished hosting a dinner party and cleaning the dishes. One woman told us she knew she was experiencing symptoms, but she had just entertained company and wanted to make sure everything was tidy before going to the hospital.

Women are often caregivers, and that role can lead us to prioritize others over ourselves. We've also seen the "Hollywood version" of a heart attack—a middle-aged man clutching his chest in a restaurant—but that's not usually how it happens at all.

For women, symptoms can be different. We talk, we share, and we tend to list more details. Instead of describing an intense chest pain, we might mention a dull ache, tightness in the jaw, back pain, feelings of anxiety, or heightened emotions. We tend to experience more symptoms than just a single sharp pain in the chest.

Additionally, hormonal changes throughout life—puberty, pregnancy, menopause, perimenopause—play a role in risk factors that many women aren't fully aware of. That's why we are working to increase understanding of how heart disease affects women differently.

Magazica: In some of your writings, you've highlighted that 80% of heart disease is preventable through education and lifestyle changes. What are some of the key factors?

Lianne Laing: 80% of heart disease cases are preventable with physical activity and a healthy diet.

A simple 30 minutes of movement a day—whether it's walking, stretching, or breaking it up into three 10-minute walks—makes a significant difference. It doesn't have to be a hardcore workout; it just needs to be consistent movement.

Beyond exercise, avoiding smoking or vaping, watching blood pressure levels, avoiding diabetes, and maintaining a balanced diet are crucial. Many people who suffer from cardiac-related conditions do so because they haven't integrated these preventable measures into their daily lives.

Magazica: So even a brisk walk or time on a treadmill can help?

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**80% OF HEART DISEASE
CASES ARE PREVENTABLE
WITH PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
AND A HEALTHY DIET.**

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Lianne Laing: Absolutely! A brisk walk can be a life-saving measure. You're significantly reducing your risk. Your heart is a muscle, I could shout this from the rooftops, I would.

Still, I recognize how difficult it can be for people to integrate movement into their routine. I was never in a job where I sat all day—working in media, I was constantly moving around. So, I never understood why people who sat all day wouldn't feel the urge to get up and be active.

Then, when I left television and transitioned into work where I was sitting for long periods, I realized how exhausting it is to sit all day. You think, "This is what it's like to feel tired and unmotivated to move," because your body is fatigued from inactivity.

That realization helped drive "Jump In for Women's Heart Health," a 30-day challenge in September that encourages people to commit to 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

Magazica: That's a great initiative!

Lianne Laing: I've worked out every day since I was six. I had four-hour training sessions, so getting in an hour or half an hour is nothing to me. It's my favorite time of the day. This morning, I got up at 6:30, and my first thought was, "Get me to the gym."

But for many people, incorporating regular exercise is a big challenge. That's why we create initiatives and campaigns to provide support, offer guidance, and share the necessary tools to make physical activity accessible. At the end of the day, it's truly a game-changer.

We've had participants in Jump In for Women's Heart Health who couldn't even walk around the block. It seemed impossible for them. Yet, many of these same individuals have gone on to run half-marathons and marathons.

Magazica: Wow!

Lianne Laing: Their entire lives have changed. People who were once on multiple medications—dealing with high blood pressure, obesity, and other risk factors—saw steady improvement with each step they took. They were literally walking themselves into better health, reducing their risk factors bit by bit.

Magazica: Yes, and now you're working at the Heart Institute, which is at the forefront of innovation.

On your website, you mention "innovative discoveries, groundbreaking research, and precision medicine." Could you explain, in simple terms, how these advancements are making tangible differences in the lives of cardiac patients and their families?

Lianne Laing: We focus heavily on prevention, which is a major piece in keeping people out of the hospital in the first place. The Ottawa Heart Institute is one of the leading cardiac centers in the world, treating over 241,000 patients annually and performing more than 2,000 catheter-based and open-heart surgeries.

It's an incredibly busy cardiac center where life-saving work is happening every single day. Sitting at my desk in the office, I hear about three Code STEMI's called over the intercom daily—each of those announcements signals a patient in critical condition, where every second counts.

A full team—paramedics, cardiac specialists—is on standby to immediately assess and treat these patients, often placing stents within minutes. It's a highly coordinated process, refined through years of research and trials.

Magazica: That sounds incredible.

Lianne Laing: It really is. Before I joined, the Institute completed a massive \$100 million renovation just ahead of 2020. Now, we have brand-new towers, hybrid operating rooms, and cutting-edge imaging centers. These state-of-the-art facilities ensure top-tier patient care.

But beyond infrastructure, the real investment is in research—developing better protocols, treatments, and technologies.

What makes the Heart Institute unique is that our researchers and scientists work directly alongside the clinical staff. This bench-to-bedside model ensures that breakthroughs in research translate quickly into real-world patient care.

When we talk about "groundbreaking research and innovative patient care," we mean that every case is approached by both a cardiac surgeon and a cardiologist. Together, they determine the best treatment plan for each patient, which isn't always the standard approach at other institutions.

This team-based model was developed through research, proving that collaboration leads to better outcomes.

Magazica: And precision medicine?

Lianne Laing: Precision medicine is individualized care. In the past, treatment plans were more generalized, but now, thanks to our combined research and clinical expertise, we tailor treatments specifically to a patient's needs.

For example, one of our researchers, Dr. Alarcon, spent years conducting thousands of chemical trials. His breakthrough? A nano-gold particle spray designed to be applied to the heart after surgery—like a Band-Aid—to aid healing.

Magazica: Wow!

Lianne Laing: That breakthrough—the nano-gold spray—is the result of meticulous research and science. It took over 2,000 attempts to refine the formula and reach the perfect combination.

Magazica: That's a long process!

Lianne Laing: And it's exactly why funding research is so critical.

I can't wait for the day when that spray is applied to a patient's heart—when it speeds up recovery to the point where. The patient will have a shorter recovery and length of hospitalization.

Magazica: Incredible advancements.

Lianne Laing: Absolutely! Within the Heart Institute, we're funding research that will shape the treatments of the future.



That's why I engage with donors—I talk to them about how their support directly contributes to medical advancements that could benefit them or their loved ones down the road.

Magazica: The specialists working on these projects are clearly deeply passionate about public health. You work closely with a generous donor base.

As you share these insights with them, what motivates individuals to support the Ottawa Heart Institute Foundation or similar organizations? What inspires philanthropy in people?

Lianne Laing: I'm going to give you an honest and transparent answer. The Heart Institute saves lives every single day. We give individuals and their families the gift of time.

When you speak to someone whose life has literally been saved by the Heart Institute, they live in a state of gratitude—a kind of appreciation that fuels their desire to give back.

It's a different experience compared to other areas of healthcare. For example, mental health patients may leave treatment facing continued challenges, still struggling with the effects of their illness. Cancer patients undergo grueling treatments and often fight a long battle with uncertainty.

At the Heart Institute, a patient might go in for bypass surgery or have a stent placed, and then, suddenly, they're given a new lease on life. They are grateful. They feel hopeful.

Magazica: That must shape a lot of their perspective.

Lianne Laing: Exactly. Additionally, our patient base is at a different stage of life compared to other healthcare institutions. Consider children's hospitals—patients are young, their parents are just starting out, managing financial responsibilities like mortgages and education savings. Their focus is survival, making it through day-to-day life.

In contrast, Heart Institute patients are often more established in their lives. They've built careers, raised families, and they have the ability to donate back.

For me, as the head of this foundation, it often makes my conversations with donors easier. When I speak with someone whose life has been saved, they already feel a deep connection to our mission.

Some donate immediately, others reflect over time, but the impulse to give is there.

Magazica: That's incredibly powerful.

Lianne Laing: Absolutely. Beyond major gifts, we also engage the community through Heart Month, which takes place in February. It's a time when the entire Ottawa community comes together, proud to have one of the world's leading cardiac centers right in their backyard. These donations—whether they're large or small—allow people to feel connected to something bigger than themselves.

Magazica: Or something good, yeah.

Lianne Laing: I often have two very different conversations with people. Some are deeply interested in science, where the future is headed, and emerging fields like AI and data science. They see the potential of these advancements and want to invest in them.

For me, these discussions are fascinating, and in many ways, easier—because there is so much good happening, so much progress being made.

Magazica: That makes sense. And based on your close experience with people at the Institute, what would you say to our readers—or viewers—who are facing their own health challenges or supporting loved ones through them? What message of hope or encouragement can you share?

Lianne Laing: You know, heart disease is complex, and for many, family genetics plays a major role.

It's difficult to watch generations—grandfathers, fathers—go through the same struggles. That's why prevention is so important.

We emphasize education—helping families understand how to best care for themselves and their loved ones. Having these conversations early is key.

Magazica: That's an important perspective.

Lianne Laing: It is. But it's also one of the hardest conversations to have.

People often want the magic pill—something simple to fix everything.

They think, "I'll just get the surgery," or "There has to be a pill to lower my blood pressure or fix my weight." But the truth is, while life-saving surgery is there when it's necessary, wouldn't it be better to avoid needing it altogether?

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**IT'S WORTH TAKING THE
LEAP, EVEN WITHOUT A
PARACHUTE.**

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Magazica: Right.

Lianne Laing: That's the challenge—getting through to people before they reach that point.

If you see a pattern—your dad, your brother, your uncle all experiencing the same health issues—there's a common denominator. Something needs to change.

It's about making lifestyle shifts. Not smoking. Reducing stress. Managing blood pressure. These changes take effort, but they work.

Magazica: So people need to put in the work before it's too late?

Lianne Laing: Exactly. And sometimes, it's fear that drives change.

I've had many people come to me after seeing a loved one struggle. They watched them ignore their health warnings—knowing full well they needed to slow down, eat better, or be more active—and then paid the price.

Those friends, those family members, they look at that experience and realize: "That could be me. I need to change my ways."

Magazica: I can relate to that. My father had COPD. He smoked a pipe, and I was a smoker too—years ago. Not excessively, but enough. When I saw what my father went through during his diagnosis, that fear made me quit smoking.

Lianne Laing: That's exactly it. Fear can be a powerful motivator—in the best possible way.

Magazica: And in terms of lifestyle management, I think many people struggle because unhealthy habits—junk food, a sedentary lifestyle, smoking—create a comfort zone.

People don't want to break that bubble. Their bodies adjust to it, so it feels normal.

Lianne Laing: Right. And they think, "If I stay in my comfort zone, maybe there's a magic pill that will fix everything without requiring effort."

Magazica: But that's the hard conversation.



Lianne Laing: Exactly. That's the conversation we try to have before people reach a crisis point. And it's harder than I ever expected.

Magazica: Because changing habits isn't easy.

Lianne Laing: Right. People convince themselves that things will always stay the same—but they won't.

Just the other day at the gym, someone stopped me—he had been a patient at the Heart Institute. He looked healthy, full of energy.

He told me, "I'm feeling great. I'm 80 pounds lighter than when I had surgery."

Magazica: Wow!

Lianne Laing: He had been overweight, in and out of hospitals, struggling. But when he realized that if he didn't change, he would keep going back to the Institute, something clicked. He started making small changes—step by step. Now, he's 80 pounds lighter, and his life has transformed. I asked him, "At 80 pounds lighter, what does life feel like?" He said: "It's night and day. I wake up, and getting out of bed doesn't hurt. I have energy. I feel purpose. I can make plans, I can be active with my child—because I'm finally healthy."

Magazica: That's an incredible transformation.

Lianne Laing: It is! And that's what I wish people understood. If they take that first step, life will get so much better. But getting someone to take that step—that's the hardest part.

Magazica: And for him, it took reaching the crisis point.

Lianne Laing: Exactly. He had known he was overweight. He knew he was at risk. But it wasn't until he became a patient that he finally made the change. That's the challenge—helping people act before it gets to that stage.

Magazica: The conversation you had with that person—sometimes psychology refers to it as negative visualization. The idea that if I continue down this path, I'll end up back where I started—obese again, back at the Heart Institute, going through the same cycle of medication and surgery. I don't want to go through that again.

Lianne Laing: Exactly. And then, because that's how I approach these conversations, I ask, "Do you have children?"

I wait for the answer, and then I say, "I lost my dad to a heart attack two weeks before my wedding. I think your daughter would really love to have you walk her down the aisle one day."

Magazica: That's powerful.

Lianne Laing: I didn't get to have that moment. My dad wasn't there to walk me down the aisle. That realization stays with me. So I ask, "What example do you need from me to understand how important this is?" That's how we have these conversations—real, honest, emotional.

Magazica: What I did not have as a daughter, I want your daughter to have.

Lianne Laing: Exactly.

Magazica: That's a powerful emotional touchpoint. At the end of the day, we are emotional people. We make decisions based on emotion—and sometimes, that's a good thing. These deeper emotions can motivate people to take action—life-changing action—that benefits not just themselves,

but their loved ones.

Lianne Laing: And that's why we have programs in place. We're not just saying, "Go do this."

Magazica: Programs? Could you expand on that?

Lianne Laing: Yes. We understand how difficult it is for people to quit smoking. It's an addiction—whether cigarettes or vaping. That's why we offer smoking cessation programs.

Magazica: Please, tell me more about that.

Lianne Laing: There's a wealth of resources available—people are not expected to figure it out alone. We don't just say, "You need to make a change." We say, "Here's how. Here are the tools. Let us help you." Some patients need to lose weight before surgery, because their current health puts them at high risk during the operation. We have prevention and wellness programs to support them. We provide guidance on healthy eating, safe ways to incorporate movement, and post-surgery rehabilitation. There's never a moment where patients are left to navigate things alone—support is always available.

Magazica: That's reassuring.

Lianne Laing: One of our biggest success stories at the Heart Institute is our smoking cessation program. The toolkit developed by our team has been adopted worldwide. Dr. Andrew Pipe and Dr. Robert Reid led the charge decades ago.

Magazica: You've been part of some incredible missions. It sounds like you're on a mission with a vision. Looking ahead, what are the most exciting developments or initiatives at the Ottawa Heart Institute Foundation that you believe will make a significant impact on cardiac health—both locally and beyond?

Lianne Laing: One of our biggest projects right now is our Mobile Valve Clinic.

Magazica: Oh, tell me more!

Lianne Laing: It started as a year-long pilot project, led by Dr. Messika and a nurse practitioner. They traveled to underserved communities, providing on-the-spot heart screenings. Many people today don't have access to family doctors or struggle to get proper care. The Mobile Valve Clinic was designed to bridge that gap—offering blood testing, heart imaging, and risk assessments. For a year, we couldn't talk publicly about the project. We knew it was happening, but we needed solid data first. What we found was staggering—30% of the patients screened had clear risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Magazica: That's shocking.

Lianne Laing: It was eye-opening. Because of the clinic's imaging capabilities, we could detect early signs of valvular heart disease, and more. Some people visited the clinic just to try it out, and were immediately referred to the Heart Institute—without previously knowing they had a problem.

Magazica: Incredible.

Lianne Laing: Once the pilot program ended, we realized the huge demand for this service. Now, we're building a mobile clinic—rather than Dr. Messika and his team traveling by car and setting up makeshift spaces. The plan is to bring the Mobile Valve Clinic to underserved communities, retirement homes, community centers, and anywhere patients need access.

Magazica: What challenges have arisen?

Lianne Laing: With 30% of people being diagnosed with risk factors, we have a new issue—how do we manage this influx of patients without overwhelming an already strained healthcare system? It's not enough to identify the risk—we need to ensure follow-up care is available.

Magazica: So, one success creates another challenge?

Lianne Laing: Exactly—it's a domino effect. Every breakthrough comes with new obstacles to solve.

Magazica: Beyond the Mobile Clinic, what other major projects excite you?

Lianne Laing: Advanced imaging tools—we need more MRIs. There's an enormous waitlist for MRIs in Canada. But cardiac patients need urgent imaging. That's why we're pushing for additional MRI machines—not just for patient needs, but to support cutting-edge research as well.

Magazica: What else?

Lianne Laing: We just launched a new Data Science Center—bringing together AI specialists and researchers to analyze data points from heart imaging. Imagine combining MRI results with AI models that can predict outcomes years in advance—helping doctors treat conditions proactively rather than reactively.

Magazica: That's revolutionary.

Lianne Laing: It is! There's never a shortage of groundbreaking work. That's what makes my job exciting—and honestly, a little easier. And my role? Storytelling—sharing the incredible work happening here in a way that resonates with donors and the public.

Magazica: That's a skill in itself.

Lianne Laing: Absolutely. It's all about connection.

Magazica: Your excellent team and the AI and Data Science Center place you ahead in integrating artificial intelligence in healthcare.

Lianne Laing: I had to learn what a data scientist was! Can you believe it? One moment, we're talking about traditional research, and suddenly—data science enters the picture.

Magazica: We're all learning!

Lianne Laing: Exactly! And honestly, if my science teachers could see me now—they would be shocked. I was never the science type. My world was English, public speaking, marketing, and business. I wish I had paid more attention in science class! But now? I find it fascinating. Seeing how we're creating hubs where experts collaborate, share knowledge, and drive medical breakthroughs—it's incredible. And the infrastructure is already in place.

“

STORYTELLING ISN'T JUST ABOUT FUNDRAISING—IT APPLIES TO ANY BUSINESS.

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Magazica: That's a key advantage.

Lianne Laing: Absolutely. And now it's about partnerships. Having strong data points is great—but the more we collaborate across hospitals and countries, the better the research.

Expanding who we work with and sharing data is how we'll make groundbreaking discoveries.

Magazica: Final question—for our readers. We're living in economically uncertain times, and some people may be considering a career change or searching for more meaning in their professional lives. You've had an incredible journey—first a gymnast, then a business student followed by a career in television, and now, working alongside leading doctors and scientists at the Ottawa Heart Institute. For those contemplating a career shift or seeking purpose in their work, what advice would you give them?

Lianne Laing: There is so much possibility. But you have to understand—you're going to face fear. You're going to experience uncertainty. And you will definitely battle imposter syndrome—that voice in your head that says, "Do I even belong here?"

Magazica: That's a common struggle.

Lianne Laing: Exactly. You're stepping into the unknown. Some people say, "Fake it till you make it." There's some truth to that.

For me, there were three key factors that made all the difference:

1. Your skills are transferable. Whatever skills you've developed—they can be adapted to many industries. You might change the terminology, the conversation approach, but your core expertise remains valuable.

2. Be coachable. Coachability is one of the most underrated success factors outside of sports. If you can absorb feedback, learn, and adjust, you can thrive anywhere.

As a gymnast, my coach repeated the same instructions to me a thousand times—until I made the tiny adjustments that changed everything.

That's exactly what happens when transitioning careers. You have to be willing to learn, take constructive criticism, and grow.

3. Trust your gut. If you're entering a new field, your unique perspective is valuable—even if it's different from the status quo.

When I entered fundraising, I didn't want to follow traditional methods. People asked, "Do you want to take courses on philanthropy?" My answer was no. I already had a team of fundraising experts—they knew the technical aspects of the industry. But I had seen charities firsthand. I had interviewed organizations, hosted their events, and understood what resonated with donors. That gave me a fresh perspective—and I disrupted how things had always been done.

Magazica: That's bold!

Lianne Laing: It is! Take direct mail, for example. I don't open mail. My generation doesn't open mail. So why would I push a fundraising campaign that people like me wouldn't even read? I needed to change the approach—reach people where they actually engage. They're on social media. They're checking email. They're on LinkedIn. So I adapted—and now, we connect differently.

Magazica: That's an important insight.

Lianne Laing: Absolutely. And people need to trust that their past experiences can translate into a new field. I could have stayed in television until I was forced out. But why? My husband noticed the difference. In my 20 years in TV, he said he could count on one hand the times I came home truly excited about my day. Now? I come home inspired—every single day. I'm constantly telling stories, sharing discoveries, and learning something new. It's daily. And that's worth the risk.

Magazica: That's incredibly motivating.

Lianne Laing: If I could tell people one thing—it's worth taking the leap, even without a parachute. Because when you land in a place of passion, purpose, and gratitude, everything changes. You feel healthier. You wake up excited. I go to bed on Sunday nights, and I don't dread Monday—I can't wait to get started. By Friday, I reflect: "Did I accomplish enough this week? Am I proud of my work?" And if I can live like this for the next 20 years, I want that for others, too.

Magazica: That's a powerful perspective.

Lianne Laing: People ask me all the time—how do you shift careers? The answer? You just jump. You trust your gut. And you know that you can do it.

Magazica: One of my professors at UofT once told me something similar. I asked him, "What makes a career successful?" He said, "When your skill set meets your passion." That's when work becomes your vocation—your true calling.

Magazica: One of my professors at UofT once told me something that stuck with me. I asked, "What makes a career truly successful?" He said, "When your skill set meets your passion." When those two elements align, that's when work becomes a vocation—a calling rather than just a job. And the way you answered my last question, Lianne, I think you cracked the code.

Lianne Laing: I live in a space of gratitude. My team often tells me, "You're so positive—it's like things just fall into place." We've had great years, and people say, "Wow, you're lucky." But I always tell them—it's not luck. We are in the right space, where everything is aligning. I'm deeply spiritual—I believe that the energy you put out is the energy that comes back. We are putting the right energy into our work, and in return, it's coming back to us. And I believe that when all of us are deeply passionate about what we do, the universe finds a way to guide us toward success. It's an incredible feeling to live and work in that space. And at the end of the day—I'm representing a winning organization.

I'm representing the Ottawa Heart Institute—it's a gem. A truly remarkable place.

Magazica: It is. Thank you, Lianne. On behalf of our readers and viewers—thank you so much for your time and for sharing your insights.

Lianne Laing: I truly appreciate it. Thank you. And I'm so glad that you have this platform to share these conversations.

Magazica: Thank you.



I live in a space of gratitude.

Lianne Laing

SHARE YOUR STORY OF STRENGTH

At Magazica, we aim to highlight inspiring journeys of overcoming health challenges.

Have you faced a health crisis, battled illness, or adapted to a chronic condition?

Your story of resilience could inspire others and spark hope. We'll work with you to share your experience respectfully and authentically. Whether it's a physical triumph, emotional growth, or simply finding strength to persevere, your story matters.

Share your story at editorial@magazica.com

Let's inspire hope and healing together. Your voice could change someone's life.

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Wellness in the Workplace:

How Canadian Employers Are Prioritizing Mental Fitness

By Editorial Team

Workplace wellness in Canada used to involve only occasional events like yearly yoga sessions and break room fruit baskets. Since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted global activities several years ago workplaces began experiencing fundamental structural changes. Canadian businesses today transform their operations to actively support employee mental fitness and wellness through flexible and measurable workplace changes.

The numbers paint a clear picture. According to Dialogue Health Technologies' recent research

findings 46% of employees in Canada anticipate their employers will provide Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) as ongoing support for well-being rather than merely crisis intervention. The services provided by these programs which include mental health counselling, career guidance, legal advice and financial planning are now essential workplace infrastructure instead of optional extras. Access to resources represents only part of the equation as proactive care remains equally essential. The latest report revealed that more than 50 percent of workers expressed a desire for wellness programs which integrate daily support tools like self-directed fitness options, mindfulness activities and lifestyle coaching (Dialogue Health Technologies, 2024).

The six-day workweek paradigm in Canada is being replaced by increasing attention toward the four-day workweek model. Employers who once viewed this concept as radical now test and adopt this approach. MavTek in Montreal and Produce8 in British Columbia tested reduced workweek schedules and achieved impressive outcomes. Employees complete their 32-hour work schedule within four days while maintaining their regular income. The impact? Employees experience enhanced work-life balance while experiencing fewer burnout symptoms and demonstrating higher productivity levels. A BrightHR Canada study discovered that 34% more companies are testing this model because of real improvements in performance and engagement besides employee demand (Benefits Canada, 2024; Ralia Retreats, 2024).

Flexible schedules and reduced workweeks represent just one component of the broader equation. The core principle of workplace wellness initiatives focuses on establishing work environments that ensure psychological safety for employees. Organizations like the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) have played a key leadership role at the national level. MHCC operates The Working Mind program which trains both business and public sector employees and managers to detect early signs of mental health problems while also reducing stigma and encouraging open dialogue. The Psychological Health and Safety Audit Program helps employers evaluate their teams' mental wellness status and improve working conditions (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2024; Opening Minds, 2024).

The increasing number of awards and certifications awarded to employers who support mental health demonstrates how central mental wellness has become in today's workplace.

Great Place to Work® Canada's 2024 Best Workplaces™ for Mental Wellness list highlights organizations that establish environments surpassing standard expectations to support mental and emotional health. To be eligible companies need to employ at least 100 people with a minimum of 80% of their employees confirming their workplace supports both mental and emotional well-being. Businesses from all industry sectors including law firms and tech startups have discovered that supported individuals show enhanced performance and longer retention rates (Great Place to Work Canada, 2024).



Smaller businesses compensate for their lack of resources by developing inventive community-based employee support initiatives. Businesses offer mental health days and therapy app subsidies while hiring experts to deliver on-site workshops. Some organizations are utilizing peer support structures to motivate employees to consistently conduct regular check-ins with their colleagues. The underlying philosophy is clear: well-being is not a one-size-fits-all model. The ultimate goal is to recognize team necessities and develop solutions that can grow with your organization while staying humane.

The most encouraging aspect of this movement lies in its representation of a widespread cultural transformation that now views vulnerability positively and treats self-care as a necessity. During the pandemic mental health taboos broke down which made employers and employees face the emotional burden of contemporary work life. The challenges of remote work combined with social isolation and changing priorities led many Canadians to reconsider the traditional 9-to-5 work schedule. That reckoning has given rise to a new kind of workplace: the new workplace demands balance and wellness to serve as structural principles instead of optional extras.

The transformation of workplace wellness continues to develop but faces numerous obstacles. Remote and hybrid working methods provide flexibility yet risk blurring work-life boundaries and causing digital fatigue. Numerous employees express feeling perpetually available while many companies struggle to handle these modern requirements. The ongoing dialogue about workplace wellness demonstrates substantial progress in itself. Businesses are creating Chief Wellness Officer roles and forming mental health task forces while developing inclusive policies to accommodate various mental health requirements.

The workplace has emerged as a vital support system because mental health services in Canada have been historically underfunded or hard to access. Although no company can address every problem they face, organizations that prioritize their employees' well-being discover monetary gains beyond employee morale and achieve stronger loyalty, innovative thinking, and sustainable development.

So whether it's through a shorter workweek, an open-door policy on mental health conversations, or simply offering space for people to breathe, the message from Canada's evolving workplaces is clear: wellness isn't a trend—it's a necessity.

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*Thomas
Buonassisi*



Dr. Thomas Buonassisi is a board-certified facial plastic and reconstructive surgeon specializing in advanced cosmetic rhinoplasty, preservation rhinoplasty, and ultrasonic techniques. With over 25 years of experience and a reputation as a leader in facial aesthetics, Dr. Buonassisi is known for his precision, expertise, and commitment to natural, personalized results.



The New Era of Rhinoplasty:

What Patients Need to Know

For years, rhinoplasty has been viewed through a narrow lens—either as a dramatic transformation or as something only celebrities do. But today, the landscape is shifting. Patients are becoming more educated, more discerning, and more interested in results that enhance rather than erase. Social media, emerging surgical techniques, and a more global approach to beauty have all contributed to a new kind of rhinoplasty—one that is about refinement, function, and, above all, individuality.

As a surgeon specializing in cosmetic and functional rhinoplasty, I've had the privilege of helping thousands of patients achieve results that look natural and feel authentic. What I see, time and again, is that patients don't necessarily want a different nose—they want their nose, just better.

So what's driving this evolution? Here are some of the most interesting shifts happening in the rhinoplasty world today.

1. The Rise of Personalized, Ethnic Rhinoplasty

A decade ago, many rhinoplasty procedures followed a one-size-fits-all approach, often influenced by outdated Western beauty ideals. Today, that's changing. More patients are asking for refinements that preserve their heritage, culture, and unique features—not erase them. This shift is particularly important in ethnic rhinoplasty, where subtle changes can enhance harmony without compromising identity. At the end of the day, the best rhinoplasty isn't about making your nose fit a trend – it's about making it fit you.

With the rise of personalized rhinoplasties, surgeons are expected to have an advanced understanding of different nasal structures across ethnicities to avoid an over-reduced or unnatural look. Whether it's preserving dorsal height, refining a broad tip, or strengthening nasal support, today's techniques are customized to the individual, not the trend.

My role, as a surgeon, isn't to create an artificial ideal, but to guide patients toward results that will look beautiful in real life, not just on a screen.

This is where computer imaging consultations are invaluable. With advanced technology, patients are able to preview realistic outcomes. This allows patients to gain clarity on what's achievable and how their features will harmonize post-surgery.



2. The Social Media Effect: What's Real and What's Filtered?

When I first started my practice, patients used to bring in photos of celebrities as their inspiration. Nowadays, they bring in edited versions of themselves. However, the reality is that apps like FaceTune and TikTok's '**Bold Glamour**' filter create an impossible standard—one that no surgery (or human face) can truly match. This often leads to patients feeling disappointed with their healed results.

3. Ultrasonic Rhinoplasty: Faster Healing, More Precision

One of the biggest myths in rhinoplasty is that the recovery is long and painful. In reality, advancements like ultrasonic rhinoplasty have made healing easier than ever.

Unlike traditional methods, which use chisels and rasps to reshape the nasal bones, ultrasonic rhinoplasty uses high-frequency energy to sculpt the bone with pinpoint accuracy. For the patient, this means:

- Less trauma to surrounding tissue
- Minimal bruising and swelling
- A smoother, more natural result
- A faster return to daily life

Many of my patients are surprised at how quickly they feel back to normal, often returning to work or social activities within 7–10 days.

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FOR YEARS, RHINOPLASTY HAS BEEN VIEWED THROUGH A NARROW LENS—EITHER AS A DRAMATIC TRANSFORMATION OR AS SOMETHING ONLY CELEBRITIES DO. BUT TODAY, THE LANDSCAPE IS SHIFTING.

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4. The ‘Gummy Bear’ of Noses: Why Preservation Rhinoplasty is a Game-Changer

In the past, traditional rhinoplasty often involved removing cartilage and bone to reshape the nose. While effective, this sometimes led to long-term structural weakness.

Today, preservation rhinoplasty is revolutionizing how we approach nasal reshaping. Instead of removing tissue, surgeons focus on preserving and reshaping existing structures, leading to results that:

- Age more naturally
- Maintain nasal strength
- Require less aggressive intervention

Think of it as the gummy bear implant of rhinoplasty—designed to be more durable, natural, and long-lasting.

5. Why Rhinoplasty is the Most Specialized of All Cosmetic Surgeries

One of the least talked-about truths in plastic surgery is that most plastic surgeons are not actually trained in cosmetic rhinoplasty. This is because it is not a default part of plastic surgery education, meaning that only surgeons who go out of their way to specialize in it develop true expertise.

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BUT ALSO THE
ARTISTRY BEHIND
FACIAL HARMONY.**

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In my opinion, rhinoplasty should be considered the most challenging of all cosmetic surgeries. It requires a deep understanding of both function and aesthetics, along with years of specialized experience.

With that being said, it is crucial to make careful considerations when choosing the right surgeon for your goals. A well-performed rhinoplasty should:

- Enhance your features, not overpower them
- Maintain or improve breathing function
- Look natural in motion, not just in still photos

The best nose job is the one no one can quite put their finger on—where friends and family notice that you look refreshed, balanced, and confident, but can't tell exactly why. The art of rhinoplasty is in the subtlety of it all.

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The Future of Rhinoplasty: Precision, Personalization & Natural Results

Rhinoplasty is evolving in remarkable ways, blending artistry with innovation to create more natural and personalized results. Advanced techniques like ultrasonic and preservation rhinoplasty are revolutionizing the field, offering greater precision, reduced trauma, and faster recovery. At the same time, there's a growing appreciation for ethnic beauty and individuality, shifting the focus away from one-size-fits-all trends toward refined, bespoke enhancements.

If you're considering rhinoplasty, the most important step is choosing a surgeon who understands not just the mechanics of nasal surgery but also the artistry behind facial harmony.

A great consultation should leave you feeling informed, empowered, and confident in making a decision that aligns with your unique features and aesthetic goals.

Beautification





Nutrition Trends in Canada:

From Plant-Based to Personalized Diets

By Editorial Team

Recent years have seen Canadians reassess how they connect with their food. The nation's dietary landscape experiences a profound transformation through both the growth of plant-based diets and the development of individualized nutrition plans. The transformation represents increased understanding about health issues along with environmental and cultural considerations.

Plant-based eating has become a rapidly growing trend throughout the nation. Danone Canada reports that 40% of Canadians are adding more plant-based foods to their diets while 61% eat less

meat and 42% select dairy substitutes. Shifting consumer preferences have led grocery stores and restaurant menus alike to adapt to the expanding plant-based food trend.

The Food Guide from Health Canada has been instrumental in the promotion of plant-based dietary patterns. The guide advises Canadians to frequently select plant-based protein sources such as legumes, nuts, seeds, tofu and fortified soy beverages. According to these guidelines people should boost their fiber intake while reducing saturated fat consumption to support heart health.

The idea of personalized nutrition is becoming increasingly popular beyond typical dietary recommendations. Nutrigenomics and microbiome research breakthroughs now enable dietary guidance that considers both genetic profiles and gut health. Gini Health in Toronto uses DNA analysis to determine personalized nutrition sources that match each customer's genetic profile. The method understands that health definitions vary among individuals and allows personalized plans to meet specific nutritional requirements and health objectives.

Indigenous communities throughout Canada lead initiatives to restore traditional food systems by participating in the Indigenous food sovereignty movement. The project assures the delivery of nutritious food options that honor cultural values through environmentally friendly and sustainable production methods. Communities which work on restoring Indigenous food systems strive to enhance food security while rebuilding their cultural connections. Through programs and guided foraging walks new generations learn about wild-berry foraging's cultural and practical importance while preserving these valuable traditions.

Plant-based diets combined with personalized nutrition approaches and Indigenous food sovereignty movements indicate that Canadians are moving toward more mindful and tailored eating practices. The progress of technology together with expanding cultural consciousness enables Canadians to select diets that support their health. Canadians to select diets that support their health objectives while respecting their ethical principles and cultural identities.

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