

2023 Impact Report

fightingblindness.ca



**FIGHTING
BLINDNESS
CANADA**

HOPE IN SIGHT 2023

Charitable Registration Number: 119129369 RR0001



HOPE IN SIGHT



A year of transformative impact in vision science.

At Fighting Blindness Canada we ignite hope for those impacted by vision loss. Our relentless pursuit of breakthrough advancements in vision research is characterized by resilience, innovation, and unwavering optimism. Through our dedication to transforming lives, we're creating a brighter future in vision science.

Dear supporters,

For over four decades, Fighting Blindness Canada has been relentlessly dedicated to advancing research aimed at finding treatments and cures for blinding eye diseases. Thanks to your incredible generosity, we've achieved remarkable milestones.

Together, we've funded over \$40 million in research, invested \$5 million in educational programs and resources, and provided over 220 grants which have generated 850+ scientific discoveries.

The impacts of our Health Information Line, View Point events and Young Leaders Program are profound, offering hope and strength to those navigating their journey with vision loss.

As we look ahead to our 50th anniversary, we will continue our commitment to investing in groundbreaking studies, led by brilliant researchers who bring us closer to new treatments.

The future holds tremendous promise. With your steadfast support, we're poised to continue breaking new ground in vision health. Thank you for standing with us.

Together, we can shape a future where vision loss is conquered.

With gratitude,



Jennifer Jones
President and CEO



Tara James
Board Chair



2023

IMPACT AT A GLANCE

\$2.4M

Invested in vision research

20% Increase in education
event participants

1,052 Community event
participants

\$390k+

Invested in programs and resources

44 Clinical researchers &
scientists supported

34

Academic discoveries



ADVANCING HOPE THROUGH RESEARCH

In 2023, we invested **\$2.4 million** in cutting-edge research projects, accelerating progress towards new treatments for blinding eye diseases. Our national efforts aim to fund the most promising research, connect researchers with the vision loss community, and broaden opportunities for innovative treatments across Canada.

The research you're helping fund:

Inherited Retinal Disease:

\$1,452,478

Age-Related Macular Degeneration:

\$340,154

Glaucoma & Optic Nerve Diseases:

\$252,224

Diabetic Eye Disease:

\$109,000

Corneal Disease:

\$80,000

Other:

\$149,995

CHAMPIONS OF HOPE

**Celebrating award-winning
advances in vision research**



Thanks to the generosity of our donors and a steadfast commitment to fostering innovations in vision science, Fighting Blindness Canada proudly recognizes the recipients of our 2023 research awards.

Each award is a testament to the researchers leading the way and bringing hope to the millions of Canadians impacted by vision loss.

TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH AWARDS

In 2023, we committed \$1.67 million to the Transformative Research Awards, so scientists can explore new ideas that aim to revolutionize the understanding and treatment of vision loss.

AWARDEES



Dr. Luis Alarcon-Martinez, Center for Eye Research Australia, is leveraging cutting-edge imaging technology to unravel how disrupted blood supply contributes to optic nerve damage in glaucoma.



Dr. Marius Ueffing, University of Tübingen, is developing a novel neuroprotective drug therapy to preserve photoreceptors and slow vision loss in inherited retinal diseases like retinitis pigmentosa.

CLINICIAN-SCIENTIST EMERGING LEADER AWARD

The CSEL Award provides funding for ophthalmologists and optometrists in training to pursue sight-saving research. These promising professionals embody the hope and forward-thinking approach that define the next generation of leadership in vision care.



Ehsan Misaghi, University of Alberta, is committed to uncovering genetic causes of rare inherited retinal diseases.



Dr. Matthew Quinn, Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, is investigating the intricate links between the microbiome and age-related macular degeneration.



Dr. Jovi Wong, University of Toronto, is exploring the impact of optic nerve damage on sleep patterns, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of vision research.

EYE ON THE CURE RESEARCH AWARDS

presented by **FYidctors**[™]

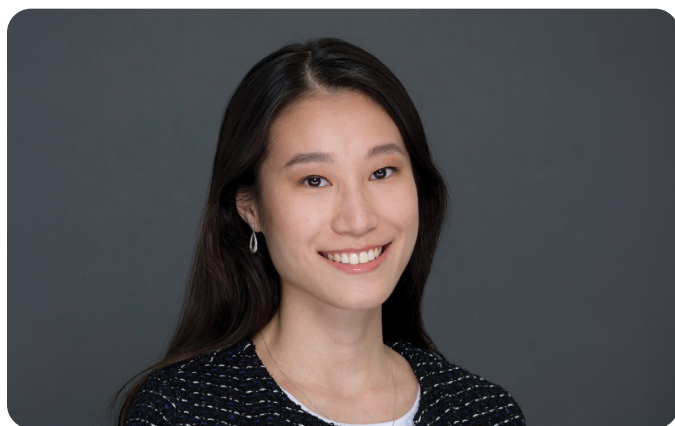
Eye on the Cure, presented by FYidctors, showcased five early-career researchers who competed for up to \$80,000 in awards by demonstrating the innovative spirit driving advancements in vision science.

GRAND AWARD WINNERS

For other winners visit fbceyeonthecure.ca



Dr. Kirill Zaslavsky, University of Toronto, received the FYidctors Research to Watch Award for his work using AI to unravel the immune system's role in inflammatory eye disease.



Dr. Qianqian Wang (top) & Dr. Jiaru Liu, University of Montreal, were honoured with the Heathbridge Capital People's Choice Award for their innovative Phase 2 trial investigating whether insulin can restore vision in glaucoma patients.

HOPE IN ACTION

FBC-funded researchers are paving the way for a brighter future. Here are highlights of some of the research conducted in 2023.

Stem cells grown in lab can reach out and connect

Dr. David Gamm, University of Wisconsin, demonstrated that stem cell-derived photoreceptor cells can integrate and function within retinal tissue, paving the way for future clinical trials.

New approach to vision restoration for inherited retinal diseases

Dr. Michel Cayouette, University of Montreal, pioneered a technique to transform retinal cells into light-sensing cells, offering hope for restoring vision lost to retinal degeneration.

Clinical trial to test first-of-its-kind drug for AMD and DME

Dr. Sachdev Sidhu, University of Waterloo, launched a Phase 1/2 clinical trial for a novel antibody therapy targeting age-related macular degeneration and diabetic macular edema.

Using optogenetics to study cell circuits and light transmission

Drs. Julie Lefebvre, the Hospital for Sick Children, and Arjun Krishnaswamy, McGill University, collaborated on optogenetic research to restore visual function by reactivating inner retinal cells, a promising avenue for treating blindness.

Using gene therapy to treat aniridia, a genetic eye disease

Dr. Elizabeth Simpson, University of British Columbia, explored gene therapy for aniridia, a breakthrough in potential treatments for this inherited eye disease.

SPOTLIGHT

LUXTURNA BRINGS HOPE TO CANADIANS



“It’s so important for people with vision loss to not lose hope.”

— Jack McCormick

In a landmark achievement for Canadian healthcare, Luxturna, the pioneering gene therapy for an inherited retinal disease, is now accessible to Canadians.

Approved by Health Canada in 2020, its public funding was secured in 2023, marking a significant milestone in bringing cutting-edge treatments to those in need.

Jack McCormick, a 27-year-old member of our Young Leaders Program, was among the first Canadians to benefit from Luxturna. Jack has Leber congenital amaurosis due to RPE65 gene mutations and underwent treatment hoping to stabilize his vision. Remarkably, Jack’s vision improved, allowing him to see better in dim light and perceive more vivid colors and details.

Jack emphasized, “It’s so important for people with vision loss to not lose hope and to continue living their lives to the fullest.” Jack’s inspiring journey underscores the transformative impact innovative treatments can have on Canadians’ lives.

IMPACT THROUGH EDUCATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

At Fighting Blindness Canada, education and community engagement are key to empowering those affected by blinding eye diseases. Our initiatives provide essential knowledge and resources, fostering a united community dedicated to advancing vision health. Thanks to our generous industry and community partners for their support of these programs.

View Point Education Series

This series continues to inform and unite communities through virtual and in-person events. In 2023, we engaged over 1,400 attendees across Calgary, Toronto, and through online webinars.

Young Leaders Program

An instrumental program in nurturing Canadian youth living with vision loss, equipping them with essential skills in leadership, advocacy, and public speaking. In 2023, we hosted two dynamic Young Leaders summits and facilitated four webinars, impacting 133 participants.

Mentorship Program

Our Mentorship Program connected 10 young Canadians with experienced mentors, fostering personal and professional growth within the vision loss community. This initiative strengthens future leadership and promotes resilience among individuals facing vision challenges.

SPOTLIGHT

ALI & STUART'S STORY



“Ali and I are proof of the profound transformations that occur through volunteerism and mutual support. The Young Leaders Program epitomizes the power of individual passion to ignite change.”

— Stuart Matan-Lithwick

Volunteering often sets off a chain reaction, profoundly impacting individuals and inspiring them to benefit their communities. This is exemplified by Stuart Matan-Lithwick, Ph.D., and Ali Usman.

In 2019, Ali immigrated to Canada alone. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa (RP), a moment that left him feeling isolated and uncertain about his university studies in science.

Initially resistant to using a white cane due to stigma, Ali found a turning point at an FBC Young Leaders event. Inspired by others, he embraced using a white cane, transforming his confidence and interactions.

Through the Young Leaders Mentorship Program, Ali met Stuart, a scientist also living with RP. Encouraged by Stuart, Ali not only continued his studies, he became an advocate for accessibility in his graduate program — leading to the establishment of an annual scholarship for students with disabilities.

In turn, Ali inspired Stuart, who found renewed purpose in mentorship and giving back to the Young Leaders community.

CELEBRATING OUR DONORS

We are fueled by the generosity of our donors. With deep gratitude, we share the stories of individuals whose support has been instrumental in advancing vision research and transforming lives affected by vision loss.

Renata Greenwood: Inspiring hope in memory

Renata Greenwood, a longtime donor, funds research into age-related macular degeneration (AMD) in memory of her late husband, Charlie.

Her generosity enabled Dr. Przemyslaw (Mike) Sapieha to link the gut microbiome to wet AMD, leading to a groundbreaking scientific publication. Renata hopes her support will lead to less burdensome and more effective treatments.

Robert Richards: Donating time and passion

Robert (Rob) Richards has supported FBC for over 12 years as a donor, fundraiser, and board member.

During his nine-year tenure, Rob has guided the organization through strategic plans and CEO transitions. His multifaceted contributions include sponsoring events, significant gifts, and supporting the Transformative Research Campaign. His leadership on various committees has been invaluable.

Matthew Jones: The gift of planned giving

Matthew Jones is at least the fourth generation in his family to be affected by retinitis pigmentosa (RP). He supports FBC through planned giving with his wife, Stephanie.

Matthew is profoundly grateful for the support FBC has given to his family over the years. He hopes that by remembering FBC in their wills, he and his wife can continue to help future generations.

CELEBRATING FUNDRAISING MILESTONES

Cycle for Sight 2023

This year's Cycle for Sight was a resounding success, thanks to the over 400 participants who formed 58 teams across Canada. The event raised **\$530,000+**, driving critical funding for vision research and advocacy.



Comic Vision 25th Anniversary

Celebrating its 25th anniversary, Comic Vision brought together an evening of laughter, culinary delights, and philanthropy in Toronto, raising **\$170,000**.

Ride for Sight 2023

Ride for Sight is Canada's longest running charity motorcycle ride, which has raised more than \$25M for vision research since its inception in 1979. In 2023, 250+ riders raised more than **\$135,000**.

650+ Riders & Cyclists

\$835,000 Raised

Countless Laughs

TRANSPARENT FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

With less than one per cent of our funding coming from government sources, we rely almost exclusively on the generosity of our donors. We couldn't do this important work without your support. That's why we aim to ensure your generosity is protected and used appropriately.

Our financial statements were prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations. They were audited by Pennylegion Chung LLP. You can find the 2023 audited financial statements on our website at fightingblindness.ca/about-us/financials

<1% of funding comes from Government sources

Fighting Blindness Canada is an accredited member of The Imagine Canada Standards Program meeting 73 standards as directed by Imagine Canada.

Where our money comes from

● Individuals:
\$3,719,376 (55.5%)

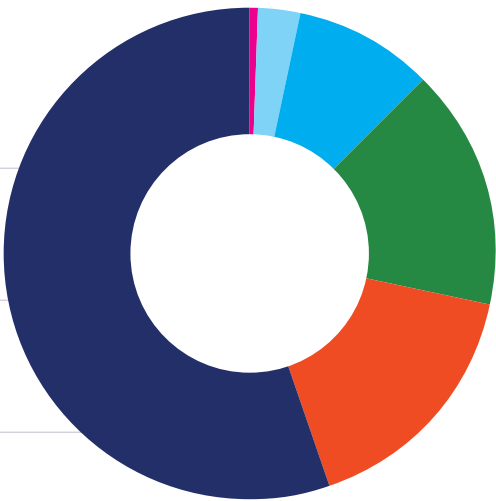
● Fundraising Events:
\$1,091,179 (16.3%)

● Corporate Partnerships:
\$1,065,294 (15.9%)

● Foundations:
\$616,781 (9.2%)

● Investments:
\$188,234 (2.8%)

● Government:
\$24,070 (0.3%)



Total:

\$6,704,934

How we spend on our programs

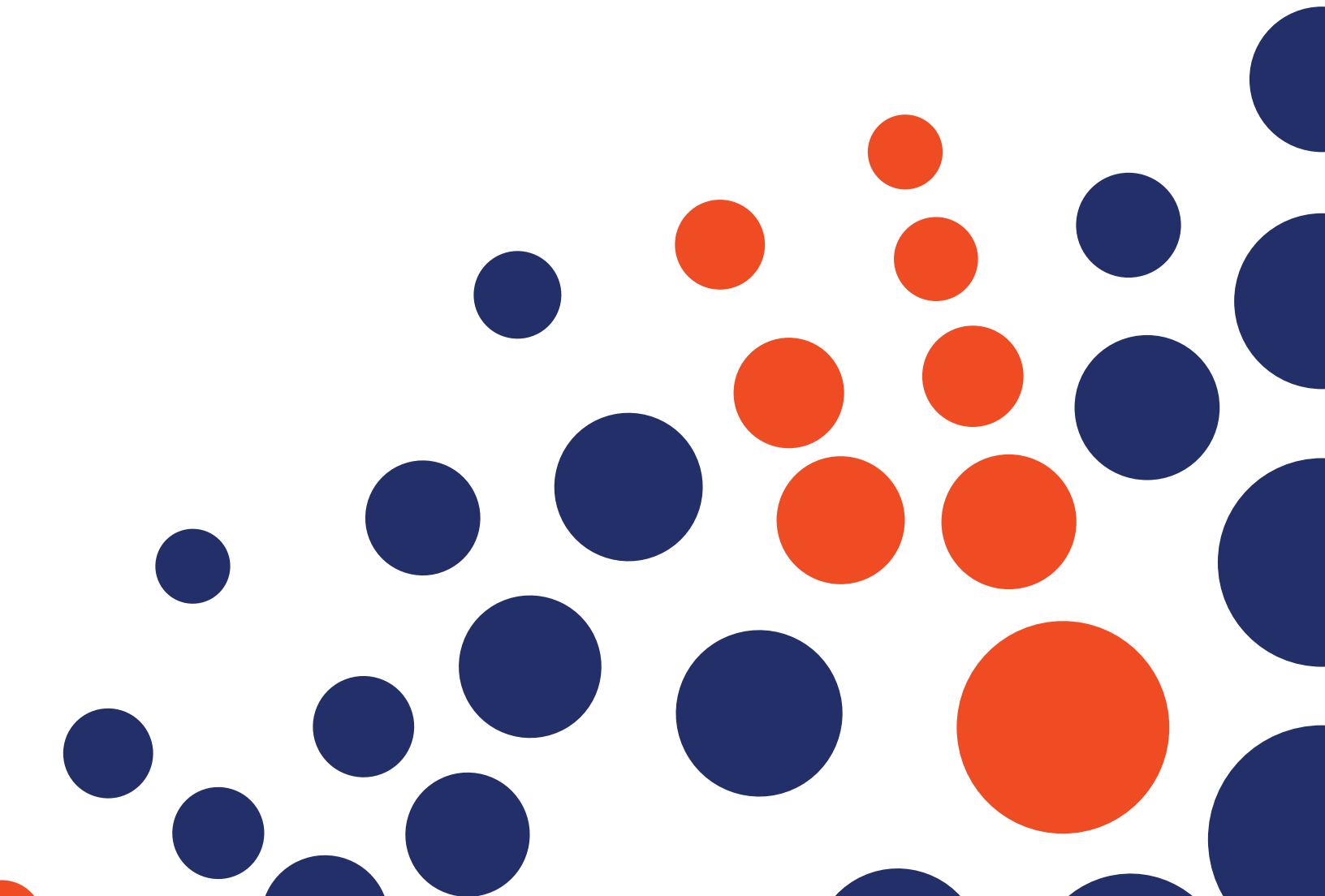
● Research Grants & Oversight:
\$2,497,460 (77.4%)

● Advocacy & Outreach
\$411,555 (12.8%)

● Education Programs:
\$318,239 (9.8%)

Total:

\$3,217,254



SPOTLIGHT ON SIGHT

50 YEARS & COUNTING

SPOTLIGHT

50 YEARS OF VISION RESEARCH

As Fighting Blindness Canada approaches its 50th anniversary, we celebrate decades of impacting vision research and support. Looking ahead, we are committed to meeting the evolving needs of Canadians with vision loss and a future guided by our new five-year strategic plan.

Our legacy of hope*

\$40M+ for Vision Loss Research

\$5M Invested in Educational Programs & Resources

220+ Research Projects

Contributions to 850+ Academic Discoveries

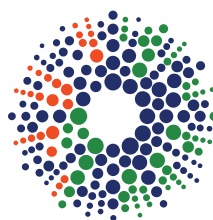
* Cumulative total as of Dec 31, 2023



CONTINUING THE JOURNEY TOGETHER



Your support is instrumental in shaping the landscape of vision health worldwide. Thank you for joining us on this journey of hope. Together we can continue to make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by vision loss.



**FIGHTING
BLINDNESS
CANADA**

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To learn more and donate visit:

fightingblindness.ca

