

# HEALTHY.TOGETHER.

## YOUR GIVING IN ACTION

### A young mother with breast cancer finds answers and hope at Markham Stouffville Hospital

“Because the staff at Markham Stouffville Hospital were so positive, going through cancer treatment never felt like a horrible experience.” —Areej Hussain



Areej Hussain

At 33 years old, Areej Hussain noticed a lump in her breast.

She visited her family doctor who sent her for two separate mammograms at a clinic to get it checked out. Both times Areej was told there was nothing to worry about.

*“That didn’t sit well with me. The lump was still there and it didn’t feel right,” Areej admits. “I asked to be referred to Markham Stouffville Hospital for another mammogram. The hospital was close to home. I gave birth to my son there and it was a great experience.”*

After her third mammogram at Oak Valley Health’s Markham Stouffville Hospital (MSH), Areej was called back for a biopsy. Dr. Jennifer Li, a surgeon at MSH, broke the news in person that Areej had a very rare, aggressive form of breast cancer.

*“I was shocked. Since I was cleared the first two times, I never thought this could be cancer,” Areej says. “Then Dr. Li told me they already had a plan. I felt instantly comforted by that.”*

Areej was referred to oncologist Dr. Sam Babak

who ran a variety of tests at MSH. This time there was good news to share. The cancer hadn’t spread. Thanks to Areej’s perseverance and the expertise of the staff in The Graham & Gale Wright Breast Health Centre, it was caught early.

*“I was told the tumour was so fast-growing, it might have only been there for a few months,” Areej says. “I’m so thankful my cancer was diagnosed before it had the chance to spread.”*

Treatment began quickly with 12 rounds of chemotherapy over four months. *“Everyone was very supportive, friendly, and positive. They even arranged for a nutritionist to come and talk to me.”*

Throughout her treatment journey, Areej continued to work full-time. She wanted to feel as normal as possible and credits her care team for making that possible.

*“My side effects were well managed. I had nausea after my first treatment and Dr. Babak took care of it so it never happened again,” Areej says. “Thanks to the staff at MSH I was able to carry on with my life.”*

...continued on page 2



**Areej and Dr. Li**

Continued from page 1...

*That was so important to me."*

Also important was the compassionate support from the Shakir Rehmatullah Cancer Centre staff. Areej will always remember ringing the bell to

mark the end of her chemotherapy treatment. *"Everyone who was available that day came to watch. They took videos. They helped turn the moment into a celebration,"* she says.

After chemotherapy, Dr. Li performed Areej's double mastectomy. *"She was amazing, always taking the time to explain everything to me,"* Areej recalls.

More scans revealed the chemotherapy hadn't completely eradicated the cancer. So to be extra cautious, Dr. Babak recommended another eight months of oral chemotherapy, followed by a year of immunotherapy.

With the added therapies, the treatment worked. Areej is now six years cancer-free.

*"I no longer need regular follow-ups. Whenever I have any concerns, I contact Dr. Babak and he tells me to come in to check it out,"* Areej says. *"He always has an open door for me."*

Areej knows how crucial it is to have access to the latest equipment and leading-edge technology for a positive outcome — technology you make possible with your support.

*"I'm very grateful to every person who funds technology at MSH,"* says Areej. *"Technology led to a quick diagnosis and the right plan of attack. It helped save my life."*

## Gift of Stocks and Securities

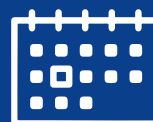
## Tax smart philanthropy—optimize your tax advantages while making a difference

By donating gifts of appreciated securities to Markham Stouffville Hospital Foundation, you are helping our hospital meet the needs of our growing, aging, and diverse community. And, it is a powerful and tax smart way to meet your philanthropic goals. We encourage you to discuss how best to optimize your charitable giving and tax benefits with your financial advisors.

To learn more about this simple and effective method of making your donation please contact Rosanna Petricca, Vice President, Development at 905 472-7579 or [rpeticca@mshf.on.ca](mailto:rpeticca@mshf.on.ca)



**Rosanna Petricca**  
Vice President, Development



## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

### The Village Grocer Giving Thanks



**Monday, October 6 to Sunday, October 12, 2025**

**4476 16th Avenue, Markham, ON L3R 0M1**

Join The Village Grocer by giving thanks to MSH. Make a monetary donation in store to support MSH and The Village Grocer will be matching your gifts, up to \$100 per donation.

### MSH Foundation 50/50 Raffle



**Tuesday, September 9 to Thursday, October 23, 2025**

You can win big and help bring a lifetime of care closer to home.

[mshf5050.ca](http://mshf5050.ca)

For a full listing of events benefiting MSH, visit [mshf.on.ca/events](http://mshf.on.ca/events)

# In Conversation with Dr. Jennifer Li, General Surgeon, MSH

Dr. Jennifer Li



**Q: How far back does your connection to MSH go?**

**A:** I started as a medical student through an Emergency Department (ED) and surgery rotation. I continued to come for rotations throughout my residency. The friendly environment and teaching were very beneficial to my professional and personal growth.

**Q: What is your current role at MSH? What makes you proud to come to work each day?**

**A:** I'm part of a team of more than 40 surgeons. We collectively perform more than 23,000 procedures each year. I treat 30-40 patients each week in both the Oncology Clinic, and the Graham & Gale Wright Breast Health Centre. I like interacting with patients of various diagnoses and supportive staff who are critical in supporting us through their daily work.

**Q: How long have you worked at MSH? Is there something special about working at a community hospital?**

**A:** I've been an official staff member for eight years, plus two years for my training. I find the urban community hospital to be the best worlds of both teaching and clinical practice.

**Q: What have been some of the biggest challenges you've faced as a doctor at MSH?**

**A:** Trying to accommodate expanding population, ever-increasing complexity of oncology patients, and the increase in referrals with limited resources.

**Q: Is there a story you can share of a patient who especially touched your heart? How did you perhaps go the extra mile for them?**

**A:** Appreciation of care goes far in maintaining motivation and preventing burnout. It always lightens my heart to get Christmas cards from cancer survivors even after the 5-year surveillance is over, to know that their lives continue on and that they are well.

**Q: Why is it important for people to support MSH and help fund vital equipment and technology? And why should donors give again?**

**A:** Our Surgical Oncology Clinic is seeing an increasing number of referrals every year. We are struggling to accommodate everybody in a timely fashion and trying our best to shorten the time between referral to consult, and decision-to-treat to surgery. We are in need of additional clinical staff to keep up with the volume.

We hope to purchase new technology to treat breast cancer that can last in patients for months and can prevent up to 2-3 painful procedures for patients, while reducing the resource burden on radiology, and make it more efficient to coordinate breast cancer surgeries. Unfortunately, the cost has been a limiting factor.

**Q: What message of thanks would you like to send to donors who support patient care at MSH?**

**A:** Your generous donations will help us purchase new technologies and equipment so that we can continue to serve our community — this will touch the lives of many cancer patients.



# A reason for gratitude

Message  
from our  
CEO

Celebrating 35 years of caring for our communities wouldn't be possible without you. Every single day at MSH, you give me a reason to feel thankful.

For example, I'm thinking about all the diagnostic equipment and state-of-the-art technology that's in our hospital right now. Even as I write, it's being used to diagnose and treat cancer and other diseases.

As you may know, government can't fund all the equipment and technology our care teams rely on to save and improve lives. That's why I'm so grateful for your commitment to our hospital.

With your generosity, you ensure our health care providers have what they need to care for patients, like Areej, right here in the community. In fact, the advancements you make possible are a big part of what attracts talented doctors and other health care professionals to MSH in the first place.

It's no secret that our community is growing. Every year, more and more people are turning to MSH for answers, treatment, and hope, just like Areej did. With you by our side, we can expand programs, embrace innovation, and support learning to meet the evolving needs of our community.

Here are some numbers to give you an idea of how many of your neighbours are receiving exceptional care at MSH.

In 2024:

- Our hospital facilitated **449,522** patient visits for those needing in-patient care and treatment.
- Our care teams in the Emergency Department responded to **106,319** visits.
- We helped to bring **3,269** new babies into the world.
- Our skilled surgeons performed a total of **23,393** surgeries.
- Our incredible doctors, technicians, and technologists performed a staggering **2,333,799** diagnostic exams and lab interventions.

Your generosity makes you a big part of every diagnostic test, surgery, and hour of need that happens at MSH. It means cancer patients like Areej can benefit from the latest treatments close to home.

It's because of you that MSH is the cornerstone of our healthy community — for the past 35 years and for the next 35 years!

Thank you for shaping the future of care,

Sincerely,



Chief Executive Officer  
Markham Stouffville  
Hospital Foundation



Give a gift today by visiting [mshf.on.ca](https://mshf.on.ca)



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