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IN-FLIGHT REVIEW

Helijet

FALL 2017



OUT OF THE RUT

Roosevelt Elk Recover
On Vancouver Island

DESIGNER DRUGS

The promise of
pharmacogenomics

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ISSN 1916-5080 IN-FLIGHT REVIEW
FALL 2017 VOLUME 10 ISSUE 3



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Above: A Roosevelt elk bugles in search of cows during the fall rut. iStock photo

DEPARTMENTS

- 06 GUEST EDITORIAL**
 The Power & Promise of Pharmacogenomics
 BY CATALINA LÓPEZ-CORREA
 CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER, GENOME BC
- 08 EMPLOYEE**
 Michael Potter, Chief Pilot
 Rotary Wing, Helijet
 BY GARTH EICHEL

FEATURES

24 OUT OF THE RUT

Vancouver Island's famous Roosevelt Elk are rebounding
 STORY BY BOB LOBLAW

32 DESIGNER DRUGS

The power and promise of pharmacogenomics
 STORY BY GARTH EICHEL



Above: The emerging field of pharmacogenomics promises to revolutionize healthcare. iStock photo

- 10 NEW & NOTABLE**
 Vancouver, Victoria & Nanaimo
 BY JENNIFER BOON
- 16 MONEY MATTERS**
 Test of Wills
 BY GARTH EICHEL
- 38 INVIGORATE**
 Time-Sensitive Treatments
 BY SUE DUNHAM
- 44 EPICURIOUS**
 Minnoz Restaurant
 BY BOB LOBLAW

Cover: Roosevelt Elk are the largest species of elk in the world. A six-point bull elk, such as this, can weigh upwards of 500 kg. iStock photo



Power & Promise

BY DR. CATALINA LOPEZ-CORREA, CHIEF SCIENTIFIC OFFICER & VICE PRESIDENT, SECTORS, GENOME BC

PRECISION HEALTH HAS THE POTENTIAL to impact every person in British Columbia. You, me, our family and friends — all of us. That's because precision health care holds the power and promise of predicting, diagnosing and guiding treatment based on a person's genetic makeup.

In particular, pharmacogenomics, the study of how your body will interact with medicinal drugs, has the potential to elevate personal care to a whole new level of accuracy and efficacy. This will lead to better outcomes for patients, which include fewer unnecessary adverse reactions, less

administration of ineffective drugs and greater health outcomes for all.

As a physician and the Chief Scientific Officer at Genome British Columbia, I am both personally and professionally vested in the application of genomic information to personal health. And you should be, too.

Through the sequencing of my own genome I learned that I am a very slow metabolizer of Warfarin, a blood thinner used to treat blood clots, stroke and heart conditions. If I need a blood thinner I need to be highly cautious about the medical treatment and the dose that I receive.

Through genomic research, we now have access to important, relevant health information of a person's genetic profile — their genome. As a result of B.C.'s leadership in genomics research and technology platforms, we are developing genomic capacity and applications across the health care system. B.C.'s pharmacists, family physicians and clinicians are already applying genomics information in order to prescribe more precise and personalized medicines. (See the article, "Designer Drugs", on page 32 to learn more about Genome BC's investments.)

It is worth noting that British Columbia is leading the way in pharmacogenomics, and working with industry partners like Life Labs, Dynacare and the BC Pharmacy Association, to ensure pharmacogenomics is accessible for everyone. We are also working with health authorities and the Ministry of Health to develop large-scale pilot projects so that those who need it will receive the appropriate pharmacogenomics test in advance of being prescribed particular medications.

Precision health and pharmacogenomics will ensure the right drug is prescribed in the right dose, at the right time to the right patient. This is genomics in action. There is a great opportunity for us in BC to prevent unnecessary hospitalizations, improve patient outcomes and save the system money. Genomics is the foundation of precision health and through B.C.'s leadership we are on the verge of a healthcare revolution. **■**



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**MIKE POTTER, CHIEF PILOT
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PILOTS ARE NOMADS BY NATURE, forever keeping their resumes up to date in case an exciting new job opportunity might appear. That can be frustrating for air carriers that invest time, energy and resources on pilot training, only to lose them to other operators.

Helijet is widely admired as one of the few companies willing to give young pilots a start in the industry, but the organization holds no grudges when its pilots decide to move on in their careers. In fact, they encourage them to leave the nest and gain experience outside the company. That's because many of those pilots eventually return to Helijet later in their careers, bringing back with them valuable skills and experience that will be of value to the organization.

Mike Potter, Helijet's new Chief Pilot — Rotary-Wing, is one such example.

Potter learned to fly in the early 1990s, first getting his commercial fixed-wing licence, multi-engine endorsement, and instrument rating, before obtaining his commercial helicopter licence in 1993. At that time, there were few jobs for a newly-minted helicopter pilot, so Potter considered himself lucky to get a job the following year working on the ramp at Helijet, fueling and unloading aircraft in all types of weather. From there he moved into flight operations, and after proving himself in that department he was given the opportunity to fly as a First Officer

on the Sikorsky S76A. Thereafter he was assigned to single-pilot light helicopters doing traffic watch and charter operations, and in 1998 he was upgraded to Captain on the S76A, eventually being promoted to Captain on the S76C+ air ambulance in service with the BC Ambulance Service.

Then in 2003, when he was at the top of his game, he decided to leave Helijet to go fly for the Calgary Police Service.

"I was looking for a new challenge in my career," says Potter. "All I had ever known was Helijet, and I wanted to experience something new."

Potter spent the next three years flying with the Calgary Police, while also doing a bit of contract flying in Northern Alberta. Then in 2006 he went to work for Calgary-based STARS, a not-for-profit air ambulance service. Drawing on his Helijet experience, he was instrumental in opening a base of operations at Grande Prairie, and eventually rose to become Director of Flight Operations.

Yet something kept pulling him back to Helijet.

"I never really broke ties with Helijet while I was working in Alberta," says Potter. "I eventually came back to Helijet in 2015 on a part-time basis as an air ambulance captain, then returned full-time as Chief Pilot — Rotary-Wing in August [2017]."

As Chief Pilot, Potter oversees every helicopter pilot working for Helijet. In keeping with that, he is responsible for all aspects of their hiring, training,

PHOTO (left): Mike Potter, Helijet's new Chief Pilot — Rotary-Wing, says he looks forward to enhancing the training program at Helijet, elevating the overall operation as it embraces and integrates new technology.

standards and proficiency. Moreover, he is tasked with ensuring Transport Canada's ever-evolving regulations are adhered to, and integrated into the company's flight operations. At the same time, he is required to liaise with other senior managers in the company.

Coming up through the ranks at Helijet, combined with his flying and management experience at STARS, gives Potter a unique degree of experience in the world of multi-engine, multi-crew, IFR (instrument flight rules) air ambulance operations. In addition to his role as Chief Pilot, he also serves as the Chair of the IFR/EMS Committee for the Helicopter Association of Canada (HAC).

Not surprisingly, Potter is a stickler for doing things by the book. And if there is one book he considers the holy grail of flight operations it is the company's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

"Supervision and development of SOPs is an important aspect of my job," declares Potter. "I should be able to jump in any aircraft with any pilot in the company and the crew coordination in the cockpit should be seamless." He adds, "It's no different at Air Canada or Westjet; adherence to SOPs is paramount."

Potter says safe flight operations also requires hiring the right kind of pilots.

Helijet is rather particular about who they let fly their helicopters. Countless qualified pilots apply every year hoping to land a job, but only those with a commitment to customer service, and the ability to work effectively with others, are considered. Potter says he learned these values firsthand working on the ramp, and also in flight ops, and so he looks for similar qualities in any prospective new hire:

"We look at more than just qualifications in an interview. We want to see someone with a well-developed and diversified background, and they need to have a personality that will work as part of a larger team that is committed to customer service — that's a big part of the whole organization, from scheduled operations to the BC Ambulance Service, and it's what helps us build trust and relationships with our customers, and the knowledge that we will always put their safety first." **H**



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SLÁINTE

Lassies and ladies will enjoy a wee dram on September 17 when the 2nd Annual Vancouver Whisky Festival celebrates the water of life.

Taking place at the Pacific Inn Resort in Surrey, brand ambassadors from around the world will be pouring samples from classic and emerging whisky regions, including Scotland, Ireland, Canada, USA, Japan, India and Taiwan, among others. Meet whisky bloggers, writers, connoisseurs and amateurs alike, and pursue Vancouver's growing whisky culture with like-minded enthusiasts.

| vancouverwhiskyfestival.com



BEYOND THE FRINGE

The annual Vancouver Fringe Festival, September 7 to 17, is a celebration of theatre for everyone, featuring more than 80 performances by over 90 artists over 11 days. Vancouver Fringe employs an "everyone welcome" selection technique — the Mainstage shows are actually drawn out of a hat, giving all artists a chance to participate. The Vancouver Fringe also features unique site-specific theatre where artists stage their work in the nooks and crannies of Granville Island, as part of the Fringe Onsite Program. | vancouverfringe.com

EAT YOUR HEART OUT

The 15th annual EAT! Vancouver Food + Cooking Festival is one of Canada's most anticipated premium world-class culinary festivals in support of Project CHEF. Attracting attendees throughout North America, the 2017 EAT! Vancouver takes place from November 6 to 11, and features culinary collaboration from award-winning chefs across Canada with local thought-leading chefs. Enjoy a culinary experience like none other at this year's event. | eat-vancouver.com

SHOW ME THE MONET

The most important exhibition of French painter Claude Monet's work in Canada in two decades, *Claude Monet's Secret Garden* traces the career of this pivotal figure in Western art history. Together with his peers, Monet's embrace of modern subject matter and innovative techniques defied the conventions of painting in nineteenth-century Europe, shaping the course of Modern art to come.

This exhibition presents 38 paintings spanning the course of Monet's long career from the unparalleled collection of the Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris. The exhibition culminates in a major series of paintings executed in his famous gardens in the French village of Giverny, where Monet lived from 1883 to the end of his life.

This showing at the Vancouver Art Gallery is the only presentation of the exhibition in North America, and runs until October 1. | vanartgallery.bc.ca



Claude Monet
Nymphéas, 1916-19
oil on canvas
Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris
Photo: © Bridgeman Giraudon/Press



Cirque du Soleil's KURIOS – CABINET OF CURIOSITIES
© Martin Girard shootstudio.ca

MONTREAL MARVELS

The Big Top is coming to Vancouver. Cirque du Soleil's KURIOS rolls into town October 19 to December 3, 2017. Step into the curio cabinet of an ambitious inventor who defies the laws of time, space and dimension in order to reinvent everything around him. Suddenly, the visible becomes invisible, perspectives are transformed, and the world is literally turned upside down.

From a group of 20 street performers at its beginnings in 1984, Cirque du Soleil is a major Québec-based organization providing high-quality artistic entertainment. The company has close to 4,000 employees, including 1,300 artists from more than 50 different countries. | cirquedusoleil.com

BODY OF WORK

More than just a gallery about the heart, skeleton and internal organs, the newly updated BodyWorks gallery at Science World promotes positive messaging about your body, helping visitors gain a better understanding about how the choices they make impact their bodies.

In the Lab Zone, presented by Genome British Columbia, you can look at yourself on the cellular level, by exploring DNA, genetics, and the rapidly expanding field of genomics. Visitors can engage in storytelling and interactive demonstrations, while learning about cutting-edge research.

Other popular galleries include the Eureka! hands-on exhibit, KEVA plank play, and the Ken Spencer Science Park. | scienceworld.ca


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MUSICAL CAPITAL

The 10th annual Rifflandia Festival, September 14 to 17, will musically transform Victoria, with a diverse line-up of artists across numerous stages, all within walking distance in the city's beautiful and historic downtown core. Over the past nine years, Rifflandia Festival has seen exponential growth, becoming a world-class destination and recognized as a festival of choice to attend in Canada and the Pacific Northwest. | rifflandia.com



ISLAND RUN

Vancouver Island's premier running event, the Goodlife Fitness Marathon, October 8, offers athletes an unmatched running experience on the pristine West Coast. Their world-class, record-breaking course is designed by runners, for runners, and is the only certified Boston Marathon Qualifier on Vancouver Island. Runners of all ages to compete in this community-based running event, which includes five races: a Marathon (42.2 km); a Half-Marathon (21.1 km); Marathon Relay; an 8 km Road Race for adults; and a 1.2 km Kids Run.

| runvictoriamarathon.com



FROM RUSSIA WITH LEAPS

Celebrate Russian ballet and the beauty of Olympic-worthy dancers in Moscow Ballet's Swan Lake at the Royal Theatre in Victoria, November 11. Moscow Ballet's traditional telling of the tragic Swan Lake story includes 40 award-winning dancers leaping in lavish costumes. | rmts.bc.ca

SYMPHONY FOR THE SOUL

With Music Director Christina Kluxen at the helm, the Victoria Symphony promises another exciting season, opening with Stewart Goodyear performing Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand, followed by Gustav Mahler's monumental Symphony No. 1. Celebrating Canada's rich music life, the Victoria Symphony will also be presenting world-class Canadian soloists James Ehnes, Jon Kimura Parker, Alain Lefèvre and Jonathan Crow.

A special Pops Series on October 28 will have you on the edge of your seat. Feel the tension build, your heart race and skin tingle with music from Hollywood Thrillers including Psycho, Jaws, Close Encounters and more! | victoriasymphony.ca



SENSATIONAL SEASON

For its 21st season, Dance Victoria brings some of the world's best dancers to Victoria with a roster of riveting and relevant performances choreographed by some of the world's leading choreographers. Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, a Victoria premiere, kicks off the Dance at the Royal Series on November 17 and 18, featuring choreography by three leading dance-makers from Spain and Finland. In addition to the Dance at the Royal Series, Alberta Ballet's beloved The Nutcracker, accompanied by the Victoria Symphony, will be performed December 1 to 3. Extravagant bejeweled sets and gorgeous costumes by Emmy-Award winner Zack Brown recreate 19th century Russia with the captivating magic of a wonderfully illustrated children's book.

| dancevictoria.com



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ISLAND STATE

The State of the Island Economic Summit is Vancouver Island Economic Alliance's collaborative approach to economic development, offering advantages to communities and businesses throughout the region. Join attendees from around the Island at the 11th Anniversary State of the Island Economic Summit, October 25 and 26, at the Vancouver Island Conference Centre in Nanaimo to network with public- and private-sector partners on regional issues and opportunities. | viea.ca



Patricia O'Callaghan. Photo by Andrew MacNaughtan

An Evening Of Leonard Cohen, November 18, performed by internationally renowned soprano Patricia O'Callaghan. This guest artist is known for her stirring and sublime performances of Cohen's work, connecting with audiences through her striking stage presence in what promises to be an incredible night of poetry and music.

| vancouverislandsymphony.com

HALLELUJAH HOMAGE

The late Leonard Cohen was one of Canada's greatest and most beloved songwriters. It is fitting then that Vancouver Island Symphony pays tribute to his legacy with a moving performance,

CHRISTMAS CRAFTS

The Christmas holidays begin with the Kris Kringle Craft Market. Come be part of the merry making at the 24th annual Christmas extravaganza, November 16 to 19, at the Beban Park Social Centre in Nanaimo where more than 150 artisans will be offering everything from jewelry to pottery, wooden toys to textiles, and glasswork to paintings, plus samplings of unique artisan foods. The Kris Kringle Craft Market gives visitors the opportunity to purchase quality, handmade pieces at a range of prices.

| kriskringle.ca

PLAY IT AGAIN

The Northern Pikes are celebrating the 33rd anniversary of their inception and the 30th anniversary of their first album, "Big Blue Sky", with the Big Blue Sky 30th Anniversary Tour this fall, performing in Nanaimo on November 11.

Formed in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in 1984, The Northern Pikes were inducted into the Western Canadian Music Hall of Fame in 2012 and continue to be a crowd favourite wherever they tour.

| thenorthernpikes.com

FOR CAUSE & CURE

Did you know that one in eight women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime? It is the most common cancer diagnosis in Canadian women. The CIBC Run for the Cure is the largest single-day, volunteer-led event in Canada in support of breast cancer research. The Nanaimo CIBC Run for the Cure event is at Beban Park on October 1 with a 5k run or 1k walk that raises funds for the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS).

| cibcrunforthecure.com





RUSTIC CHIC

Tigh-Na-Mara Seaside Spa Resort in Parksville recently added a whole new level of rustic charm with completion of a \$6 million renovation to their second waterfront building this summer, offering guests a choice of 36 tastefully appointed, bright and contemporary rooms.

“Tigh-Na-Mara was born of humble beginnings back in 1946 with a single tent on 11 acres,” said Paul Drummond, General Manager. “Today’s resort now includes 192 log-crafted guestrooms on 22 acres of forested and oceanfront property, and is home to the Grotto Spa, voted #1 Spa in Canada.” He added, “We have continued to respect our natural surroundings using sustainable practices while creating memorable guest experiences — that is just part of our culture here at the Resort.”

| tigh-na-mara.com

CANCUN CHRISTMAS

Chemainus Theatre is a vibrant, established and fully professional theatre nestled in the seaside community of Chemainus, just south of Nanaimo. From November 17 to December 31 they bring out a Christmas classic — Cornwall’s All-Inclusive Cancun Christmas. | chemainustheatrefestival.ca



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Test of Wills

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BRITISH COLUMBIA HAS LONG BEEN A RETIREMENT

haven for Canadian seniors, and their ranks are rapidly swelling. Today, approximately 678,000 people in the province are 65 and over, and that number is expected to grow to around 984,000 in 2020. By 2036 there will be nearly 1.5 million seniors residing in B.C.

This so-called “Silver Tsunami” is having wide-ranging effects on B.C. society, particularly so in terms of multigenerational wealth transfer. According to a recent survey by BMO, B.C.’s seniors have the highest net worth in Canada — largely on account of high real estate values — bequeathing an average inheritance of \$120,339. The same survey also notes that 74 per cent of the province’s seniors believe it is important to provide some sort of inheritance to loved ones.

This might be encouraging news for cash-strapped boomers and millennials, but inheritance

is a subject fraught with emotion for will makers and beneficiaries, especially when it comes to allocation of assets. Sometimes feelings of unfair treatment can trigger disputes over the validity and fairness of a will. Complicating matters is that wills and estate law can often be a grey area with claims turning on the facts on a case-by-case basis.

In an effort to update and improve the law, the provincial government enacted the Wills Estates and Succession Act (WESA) on March 31, 2014. Judges and lawyers are still wrapping their heads around implications stemming from the WESA changes, and some of the new measures have yet to be tested in court, but anyone thinking about changing, or challenging, a will in this province would do well to talk to legal counsel about the following:

WILL POWER

A will can be challenged in B.C. if there are doubts about its validity or fairness. However, the estate of a deceased may fall prey to any number of claims relating to either, or both.

The first thing to know is who can sue. A contest over the validity of a will is open to the executor and persons interested in obtaining a declaration as to validity of the will. Conversely, a claim to vary a will is open only to spouses and children. Third parties and other family relatives are out of luck.

One notable change under Section 2 of the WESA is the inclusion of common law spouses in the definition of “spouse”. Foremost, people who meet the definition — that is individuals who are legally married, or who have co-habitated more than two years in a marriage-like relationship — can claim to be provided for. But unlike the Family Law Act (FLA) enacted in 2013, the WESA does not deem couples who have children together to be spouses, though the surviving spouse may claim against the estate under the FLA.

Including common law spouses in the WESA reflects changing societal norms, but the definition of spouse is a moving target, and courts will examine a variety of different factors to determine who

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qualifies. This was illustrated in a recent BC Court of Appeal case that reaffirmed a spousal relationship existed between two partners in a late-in-life romantic relationship, even though the couple had maintained separate residences, had kept separate finances throughout their relationship, and demonstrated their intention to benefit their respective adult children from earlier marriages and not each other. Even so, the appeal court upheld the decision to vary the deceased's will in favour of his romantic partner of 20-plus years.

Conversely, a married individual who has lived with their spouse can lose entitlement to claim where the parties are separated, but not formally divorced. That's because the loss of status as a spouse happens upon separation, regardless of the duration of the marriage. (However, a former spouse may have recourse under family law legislation.)

While the WESA defines "spouse", "children" are not defined, but the term applies to biological and adopted children. Neither grandchildren, nor step children (who have not been adopted), have standing to challenge a will under section 60 of WESA. Nor do a will maker's biological children who have been subsequently adopted.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

There are four primary ways the validity of a will can be contested in B.C., each of which relates to "suspicious circumstances".

The first of these has to do with the formalities surrounding the preparation and execution of a will. Previously, failure to meet certain formalities was fatal to a will, but now, under Section 58 of the WESA, defective wills may now be saved.

"The adoption of the WESA in March 2014 brought about certain dramatic changes," says Paula Price, litigation counsel at Vancouver-based law firm Hakemi & Ridgedale LLP. "Perhaps most significant is that courts have greater discretion to make perfect what is imperfect in a will."

In fact, courts now recognize a variety of testamentary documents if they are found to be authentic, and an accurate representation of the will maker's final intent. In keeping with this, a BC court justice recently ruled that a handwritten suicide note found in the apartment of the deceased was found to be a valid will.

What is more, records that are subject to examination now include electronic documents, which

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opens the doors to claims that emails or draft wills should be recognized and given effect if there is sufficient testamentary intent.

“Given these and other changes in the law, will makers should be cautious about clearly identifying their intent,” says Price.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

The second circumstance under which the validity of a will can be challenged in B.C. is where the will maker lacked the testamentary capacity to understand what was going on when they signed their will.

This can be a thorny matter. Advanced age is often associated with diminished cognitive function, but there are varying degrees of mental capacity, and there is no standard of perfection when it comes to determining what a person understands. In other words, a will maker need not be a grandmaster chess champion to comprehend what they are doing in order for their will to be valid.

“Testamentary capacity requires that a will maker understand the nature and quality of the act in which he or she was engaged when they made their will,” says Price. “But that doesn’t mean the will maker has to meet a stringent standard to be of

‘sound and disposing mind and memory’. In essence, what is required is awareness of the effect of the will, and freedom from mental disorder.” What is more, she adds, “testamentary capacity is a legal, not a medical question. While medical opinions are valuable, they are not determinative of testamentary capacity.”

The third way in which the validity of a will may be challenged is whether the will maker knew of and approved of its content.

DOMINANCE & DEPENDENCE

The fourth, and perhaps most contentious, way the validity of a will may be challenged is on the basis of “undue influence”.

The elderly can be vulnerable to coercion and fraud, particularly in situations of dominance and dependence. But proving such suspicions is no mean feat.

Traditionally, the burden of proving undue influence rested with the party challenging the will, who had to prove coercion. There were two compelling deterrents against advancing such a claim. First, undue influence is difficult to prove: a high standard of misconduct is required, and evidence of such

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misconduct is generally lacking because it goes unwitnessed. Second, alleging undue influence is tantamount to alleging civil fraud; if such a claim is unsuccessful it can attract an award of special cost against the claimant.

Now, under Section 52 of the WESA, if the party challenging a will can establish that the alleged person of influence was in a position where there was potential for dependence or domination over the will maker, the onus of proof shifts to the party being accused to prove that there was no undue influence. (An unsuccessful claimant still runs a risk of special costs, but perhaps less so where the threshold burden of proving potential for dominance has been met.)

FREE WILL?

If a will is found to be valid, the other way it can be challenged is on fairness.

Until the mid-19th Century, what was fair in a will in B.C. was the prerogative of husbands and fathers. Wives and children had no rights to challenge a will if they were unfairly cut out. But through the latter part of the 19th and early 20th century, the provincial legislature began taking a more activist approach, placing greater obligations on men, and permitting wives and children to apply for a larger share of an estate under certain circumstances.

The new WESA rules carry on this tradition, enabling spouses and children to apply to vary a will if they believe they have been unfairly denied.

In principle, a will maker is free to decide how he or she wishes to see their estate distributed. They have the right to decide what their last wishes are, and how they should be carried out. A will maker also has the right to change his or her mind on such things. But only to a point. A will maker still has a legal obligation to make “adequate provision for the proper maintenance and support” of their spouse or minor children.

As to adult children, they normally do not have legal claim to an estate except under specific circumstances, but they may have a moral claim against an estate.

“Testamentary authority is not absolute,” says Price. “In B.C., spouses and children who have been inadequately provided for have recourse under the WESA. The idea that you can vary a will based on fairness has a long tradition in this province.”

To that end, Section 60 of the WESA empowers a

court to order the provision that it thinks “adequate, just and equitable in the circumstances” where the will maker has failed to make adequate provision.

Will makers might chafe at not being able to unilaterally decide how their estate is to be distributed, but times change and so do societal norms. After all, it was not long ago that sons routinely inherited a greater share at the expense of daughters. Likewise, some parents still try to disinherit their children for such reasons as homosexuality, religion, and mixed-race marriages, among others. In one notable case, the court ruled in favour of a woman who had been disinherited by her alcoholic mother because the daughter refused to drink with her.

So what can a determined will maker do to mitigate against a challenge on the basis of unfairness? After all, few would argue any person should be legally or morally obligated to bequeath their estate to an estranged, abusive, or incorrigible spouse or child.

In such cases, individuals can try to insulate their will by including a supporting memo that explains their rationale, but such documents are still reviewable. Courts are generally reluctant to vary allocations where they fall within an acceptable range, but they are empowered to exercise their discretion and will do so if they think it necessary to do what is just and equitable in light of the factual circumstances and societal standards.

“If you do something in your will that departs from the societal norm — like disinherit a child — and the will is challenged, then the ultimate determination of who gets what rests in the hands of the reviewing judge,” says Price. “As an alternative, will makers seeking greater certainty may opt to structure their affairs by establishing trusts, or disposing of their assets through gifts while they are still alive, thus depleting what falls into the estate.”

JUST, TO BE CLEAR

In court proceedings, legal costs are generally awarded to the successful party. This helps deter the pursuit of weak claims, and encourages settlement between parties. The same is generally true in estate litigation, but costs may be awarded out of the estate where the litigation is made necessary by lack of clarity on the part of the will maker.

To avoid depleting estate assets to fund litigation, will makers have additional incentive to be clear about their intent. Accordingly, individuals should

A twin-engine turboprop aircraft, likely a Cessna 441, is shown from a front-on perspective on a runway. The aircraft is white with red accents on the propellers. The background is a thick, grey fog, creating a sense of being grounded or lost.

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consult with an accountant and a lawyer about how to structure their estate and succession planning so as to maximize the likelihood that their assets will pass as intended.

Will makers should also be clear about where their will is located and what document or documents make up their will. Section 58 of the WESA introduces increased potential for litigation over what documents actually make up a will and will makers should be careful not to leave false “clues” about testamentary intent that departs from their existing wills.

As well, individuals would be wise to make their wills early in life when mental capacity is unlikely to be challenged. Likewise, it is best to avoid making significant changes to a will late in life, which may be deemed suspect.

COSTS & CONSEQUENCES

Parents can be powerful figures, and not all take a benign view of their children. Same goes for spouses. Likewise, children become more powerful as parents age, and not every son or daughter is motivated by altruism. When a parent or spouse dies big emotions are involved, and division within families often has as much to do with relationships and history as it does with assets.

No surprise then that the financial cost of estate litigation can pale in comparison to the emotional cost of a divided family. Indeed, few things have the potential to generate misunderstanding, disappointment and resentment like a will that may be invalid or unfair.

“Estate litigation is a process that is emotionally difficult in the best of circumstances,” says Price. “There is the emotional component of how it will affect your family, but emotional consequences can work the other way, too: a disenfranchised spouse or child who has been neglected, or endured difficult circumstances, may feel vindicated by a sustainable claim.” She adds, “The process is difficult, but in the end it may help them achieve closure. Ultimately, it’s a personal decision the individual has to make.” **①**

The information provided in this article should not be used for making legal decisions. For more information, consult with a lawyer specializing in wills, estates and succession law in B.C.

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Out of the Rut

STORY BY BOB LOBLAW

Roosevelt Elk recover on Vancouver Island

FIRST HEARD THE NOISE sometime around 05:00 in the morning. It was late September and my son, Rowan, and I were sound asleep in a log cabin on the Cowichan River. Through the still twilight came a piercing shriek that made us both bolt upright in our sleeping bags:

“Eeeeeewweehhh!”

“What was that?” exclaims Rowan.

“I’m not sure,” I reply, vainly trying to sound composed.

Then the shrill, hollow noise came again, this time with even greater ferocity:

“Eeeeeeeeeewwwwwweeeehhh!”





My first thought is that a wailing banshee is roaming the woods outside our cabin, but then I hear the crash of branches and sticks breaking. I can't help thinking to myself, 'why would a preternatural spirit be making so much noise?'

Setting fear of poltergeists aside, I open the cabin door and peer outside into the gloomy grey light. About 20 yards away I see the silhouette of a creature at the edge of the river, it's hot breath billowing steam out flared nostrils. And then I see the massive antlers atop the beast's head — six massive daggers protruding from each main beam.

I signal for Rowan to come quick: I want him to see one of the biggest and rarest species of deer in the world — the Roosevelt Elk.

RUTTIN' ROSIES

The magnificent bull is not alone. Not far away down the river we see a herd of about a dozen tan-coloured cow elk, mewing and chirping to each other. This is the bull's harem, and his shrill bugles are a way of warning any other bulls in the area to keep their distance.

Scenes such as this play out every year on Vancouver Island during the fall rut when Roosevelt Elk bulls vie for breeding rights. During this time, a dominant herd bull will run himself ragged trying to round up and breed cows, all the while fending off challenges from other "satellite" bulls circling around the fringes of his herd.

Elk are highly social animals and have a range of calls they use to communicate with each other. During the rut, bulls will bugle back and forth, calling out for cows, and challenging other bulls. Sometimes bulls engage in battle, locking their massive antlers in a shoving match for dominance — battles that can result in injury, and sometimes even death.

Cows tend to get along much better. Herds of as few as a dozen, up to 100, can often be found travelling together, squeaking, mewing and chirping to one another. These herds will often include a few immature bulls tagging along, usually yearlings with only spike or forked antlers. These young bulls will not mate until they are fully mature — usually around four years of age, by which time they are



The Roosevelt elk is a grazer during the warm months of the year, preferring grasses, new shoots, and sedges. In winter, they are browsers, preferring the small, woody plants that remain leafy even in cold temperatures. iStock photo

sporting five or six points on the main beam of each antler.

Roosevelt Elk breed in late September and early October each year, usually within a few days of the Fall equinox, which occurs on September 22 or 23 each year. Cow elk that initially do not breed may go into estrus again in early October, but by the end of that month the rut is pretty much over and most bulls have dispersed to their winter ranges to rest and recover from their ungulate orgy. Cows, meanwhile, remain together as a herd through the winter months until they give birth to their calves in the spring.

Through the winter and early spring bulls shed their antlers and begin growing another, usually larger, set in time for the coming breeding season. During this time they travel together in bachelor

A red Robinson helicopter is shown in flight, banking to the left. It is flying over a range of rugged, snow-capped mountains under a clear blue sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent circular graphic.

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Renowned for their enormous size and massive antlers, Roosevelt Elk were nearly hunted to extinction in the 19th century, but through conservation and wildlife management their numbers are rebounding once again. iStock photo

groups, dispersing to a solitary existence in late summer with the onset of the rut.

Elk species everywhere follow a similar pattern, but the subspecies of Roosevelt Elk found on Vancouver Island are like no other.

GEOGRAPHY & GENETICS

Named after U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919), the Roosevelt Elk (*Cervus elaphus roosevelti*) is the largest of the four subspecies of elk that historically inhabited Canada, together with the Rocky Mountain Elk, the Manitoban Elk, and the now extinct Eastern Elk.

Similar in most respects to other species, Roosevelt Elk, or “Rosies” as they affectionately known, are much larger, somewhat darker, and have much greater antler mass than other members of the species.

The historical range of Roosevelt Elk is limited to the Pacific Coast, along the western slope of the Cascade Mountains, from Northern California to B.C. Prior to the 19th century, Roosevelt Elk were abundant throughout this area, but market hunting during the gold rushes of the 1850s decimated their numbers, effectively exterminating them from B.C.’s southwest Mainland. The decline was so drastic that hunting restrictions and predator control measures were introduced by the late 1800s.

By some estimates, there are now as few as 3,200 Roosevelt Elk left in Canada, of which 3,000 are found on Vancouver Island. (The few small populations found in watersheds on the southwest Mainland of B.C. are there mostly a result of translocation efforts to restore the elk’s historical range.) As low as these numbers are, the elk population on Vancouver Island is sustainable and increasing, but significant threats to the future of the species remain.

PROBLEMS WITH PREDATORS

All species of elk have to contend with predators, but the Roosevelt Elk on Vancouver Island have more than their fair share. Wolves and black bears are abundant, and the Island has the highest concentration of cougars in North America. Large adult elk don’t have much to fear, but calves are particularly susceptible to predation.

Then there are human predators. Because of their size and massive antlers, Roosevelt Elk are one of the most prized big game animals in the

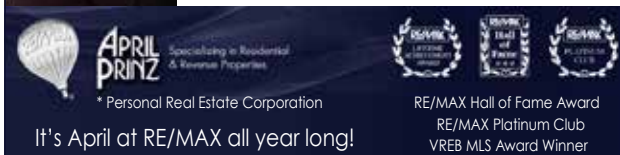


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world. Few hunters ever get to legally hunt them, though. That's because the provincial government introduced a Limited Entry Hunting (LEH) lottery to regulate distribution of the very few permits allocated to resident hunters each year. Odds of a resident hunter winning are very conservative, at around 250:1 in some management units. Even fewer permits are allocated to non-resident hunters, who pay as much as \$20,000 to hunt a trophy bull with a professional guide.

With such low numbers, one might wonder why regulated hunting of Roosevelt Elk is even permitted. That's a fair question, but wildlife conservation is about more than just numbers. Suitable elk habitat on Vancouver Island is limited due to industrial logging and urban development, which means the few areas capable of supporting elk herds are densely populated — so much so that herds can exceed the carrying capacity of the ecosystems that support them. In fact, north of Campbell River where elk numbers are highest, densities in some areas can be up to six animals per square km, which is significantly greater than typical elk density in the Rocky Mountains where one to two animals per square kilometer is the norm. As such,

permitting conservative and highly regulated hunting in specific regions helps keep elk populations stable throughout Vancouver Island.

Unfortunately, illegal and unregulated hunting poses a much greater threat to Roosevelt Elk. Every year poachers take an unknown toll on the Island's "Rosies", and few are ever caught, charged and convicted.

HABITAT PRESSURE

Predators certainly are a problem for Roosevelt Elk on Vancouver Island, but they pale in comparison to the threat posed by habitat destruction.

Like all ungulates, Roosevelt Elk require food, water and cover for survival, especially while in their winter range when cold temperatures deplete fat reserves, and snow cover limits available forage. Vancouver Island normally enjoys a relatively mild climate, but this most recent winter saw unusually cold temperatures and significant snowfall result in higher than usual mortality.

Old growth forests provide the best winter habitat for high-quality forage and cover, but industrial logging wiped out most old growth on the Island by the 1970s, and very little remains today. What is



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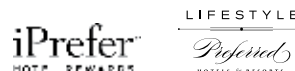
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The Island Highway between Victoria and Campbell River passes through areas of dense elk populations, increasing risk of elk-vehicle collisions. iStock photo

more, the increase in logging roads served to expand access for poachers.

Then there is the challenge of paved roads, most notably the Island Highway between Victoria and Campbell River, which passes through some of the most heavily concentrated elk habitat on the Island. The highway saw a sharp increase in elk-vehicle

collisions when the highway was improved and expanded in 1999, prompting the erection of fencing along key stretches.

The combination of roads and urban development on the Island has also fragmented elk habitat. As a large herd animal, Roosevelt Elk, migrate throughout an extensive range that can be up to 4,000 acres in size. If a herd's range is fragmented, or reduced in size, it forces elk to search for new habitat, or face starvation if browse is scarce in their winter ranges.

All things considered, the situation for Roosevelt Elk is precarious, but not dire. As a "blue-listed" species they remain vulnerable, but habitat protection is improving, and wildlife management, together with translocation programs, have been successful at halting their decline on Vancouver Island — the last remaining stronghold of Roosevelt Elk in Canada. **H**



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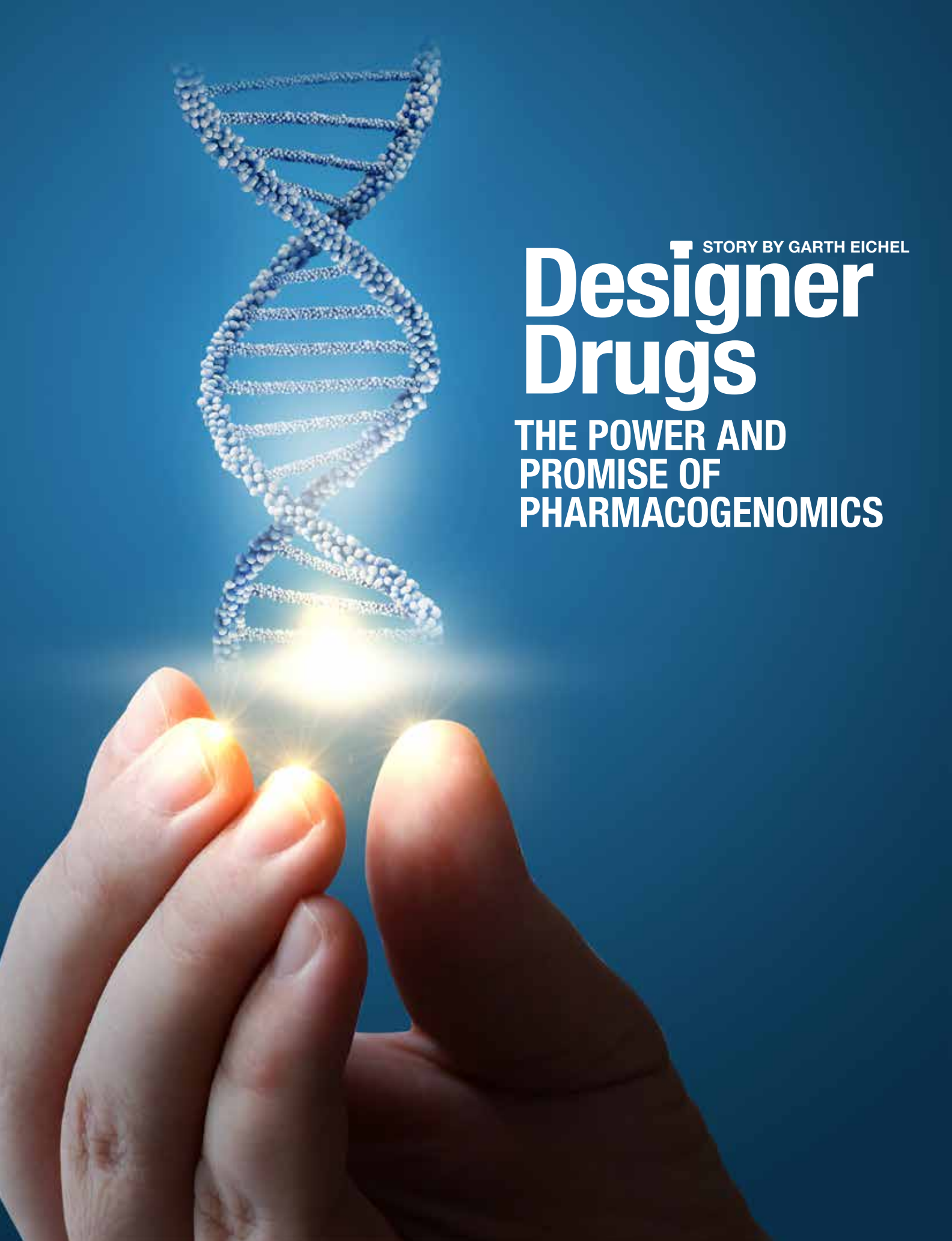
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STORY BY GARTH EICHEL

Designer Drugs

THE POWER AND
PROMISE OF
PHARMACOGENOMICS

THE HUMAN GENOME PROJECT completed in April 2003 was perhaps the greatest advance in the history of biomedical research. That's because it gave genomic researchers a key to unlocking our understanding of the root causes and probability of countless diseases and ailments, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, to name just a very few. What is more, genomic research showed the way to medicines of the future — drugs that would be specific to a level never seen before.

Now, nearly 15 years later, the emerging field of pharmacogenomics — the study of gene-drug interactions — has the power to transform our understanding of precision medicine by improving the efficacy of drugs for individuals, while at the same time reducing risk of adverse drug reactions.

PROMISE & POTENTIAL

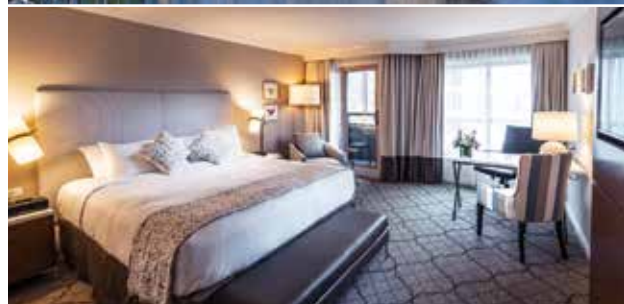
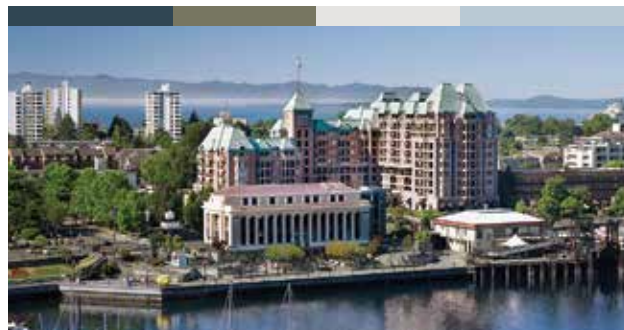
Up until just a few years ago, large pharmaceutical companies concentrated all their energy and resources on developing so-called “blockbuster” drugs that were aimed at treating a broad spectrum of society. Commonplace medications such as Tylenol, Advil, Lipitor, and Prozac targeted people as a whole, rather than as specific segments of the population.



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The same strategy applied to developing drugs for treating diseases such as cancer. But the problem with any shotgun approach to treatment is that not everyone is going to experience the same results.

“It used to be that every cancer patient would get classical ‘blockbuster’ chemotherapy treatment,” says Dr. Catalina Lopez-Correa Chief Scientific Officer and Vice President, Sectors, Genome BC. “But the efficacy was only about 20% to 30%. That meant 70% to 80% who were taking the drug got no benefit.”

Pharmacogenomics promises to change that because a person’s DNA can reveal what drugs they are most likely to respond, or not respond, to. Armed with genomic data, pharmaceutical companies have begun embracing “minibuster” drugs — those developed for certain groups of patients based on their genetic profile.

“Until recently, cancer was classified and treated by location in the body — stomach, lung, breast, colon, etc... — rather than what was driving the cancer,” says Dr. Lopez-Correa. “With the advent of pharmacogenomics, scientists now have a

An increasing number of drugs now being studied require genetic testing, and have to be developed with a genomic strategy.

mechanism for understanding the disease and developing therapies to treat a particular pathway that has gone wrong. The result is that pharmaceutical companies can now develop new drugs that target specific types of people who share the same genetic profile in their blood or tumour. These ‘minibuster’ drugs are much more effective because genomic testing helps identify and target the type of person who will benefit most.”

In fact, an increasing number of drugs now being studied require genetic testing, and have to be developed with a genomic strategy. However, the challenge with these designer drugs is their considerable cost, which is beyond reach for many individuals, and onerous for public health systems.

AVOIDING THE AVOIDABLE

More than one in nine emergency department visits in B.C. are due to problems relating to medication. In fact, an estimated 210,000 patients are treated for adverse drug events in the province each year, annually burdening the province’s healthcare system by an estimated additional \$49 million.

Pharmacogenomics can be a useful tool for reducing adverse drug events, saving lives and money in the process.

Each person has different ways of metabolizing or absorbing drugs, depending on a number of factors, including age, health, diet, fitness level, and their genetic profile. Individuals with variants linked to slower metabolism of a given drug generally require a lower dose, since their bodies do not clear the medication as quickly. Conversely, those with high metabolism need a higher dose. And in some cases, genetic testing may reveal that a person should avoid a drug entirely because it may be toxic for them.

“Genetic information helps as a way to prescribe medication more accurately, and it can help prevent people being sent to ICU,” says Dr. Lopez-Correa. “The technology we now have can reveal genetic variants in intimate detail and provide



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a greater understanding of what drugs work for whom, and under what circumstances.”

So far, researchers have linked more than 150 medications to genetic variations that affect how a patient reacts to specific drugs. The growing list does not cover every drug on the market, which number in the thousands, but it includes some of the most widely prescribed medications, such as antidepressants, cholesterol-lowering statins and blood thinners, among others.

EMBRACING THE ADVANCE

The data is beyond dispute. Genetic testing to predict a person’s response to medication is already standard practice at many clinics and research centres like the Mayo Clinic.

It’s not especially expensive either. That’s why Genome BC is co-funding a project with the BC Pharmacy Association to develop and bring to market a one-time test that could be administered by community pharmacists. This test would analyze the effects of up to 150 medications, indicating whether or not a patient has an increased risk of side effects, or a lower-than-normal chance of the treatment working.

“It’s a small investment up front,” says Dr. Lopez-Correa. “We could screen the entire population of B.C. at a fraction of the cost spent each year dealing with adverse drug reactions in hospitals. It would be much more affordable — and safer — for people to have their genetic information on their health card and be able to produce that for their doctor or pharmacist before taking a prescribed medication.” She adds, “If a person goes into ICU with a severe adverse drug reaction it costs the system huge amounts of money.”

Dr. Lopez-Correa says the numbers are quite compelling and public health agencies are taking note: “A lot of these genetic variants are at the stage where it’s not research anymore. There’s a lot of data ready to go for public health implementation.”

Of course, funding is always an issue, so the hope is that eventually a combination of cost sharing by government and individual patients, together with extended health benefits from private insurance companies, will make pharmacogenomic testing affordable for all British Columbians.

“The potential is huge,” says Dr. Lopez-Correa. “We just need to get all the pieces of the puzzle together.” **H**

GENOME 101

An organism's complete set of genetic instructions, or DNA, is called a genome. As such, an organism's DNA acts like a set of blueprints that develop and direct its growth and development. Understanding such information can reveal a wealth of information about all living things, be they humans, animals, plants, viruses, or microscopic organisms. Human DNA is a tightly coiled molecule that could stretch two metres long. DNA is made of two twisting strands connected by pairs of chemicals known as A, G, C and T. In the spiral ladder of DNA, these base pairs are the steps. Sequencing determines the exact order of these base pairs along the entire length of a person's DNA. Differences in this order, compared with most people, are genetic variations, or variants.

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6 Time-Sensitive Treatments

NON-SURGICAL COSMETIC PROCEDURES THAT REQUIRE LITTLE OR NO DOWNTIME

HELIJET'S BUSINESS CLIENTELE is largely comprised of people who work in demanding, high-profile jobs. They need to look their best — both refreshed and energetic — at all times, but few can afford to take time off work for significant cosmetic treatments. As an alternative to surgery, here are six of the most popular and effective non-surgical procedures requiring little or no recovery time.

BOTOX

Botulinum toxin, better known as Botox, is perhaps the best known and most popular non-surgical cosmetic treatment.

"Botox is very effective for getting rid of dynamic wrinkles, especially in the upper face," says Dr. Arko Demianczuk, a plastic surgeon with False Creek Healthcare Centre in Vancouver. "It softens the lines and wrinkles that are obvious as you smile

or move your face. It is also very effective for treating migraine headaches and excessive palm sweating."

The area around the eyes responds particularly well to Botox injections, eliminating or reducing the appearance of a variety of facial wrinkles, including crow's feet, laugh lines, and forehead lines, among others.

"At Baker Rejuvenation Centre, the eyes are our specialty, and we routinely recommend Botox for helping patients look more awake by providing a non-surgical eyelid and brow lift," says Dr. Stephen Baker, ophthalmologist and oculoplastic surgeon at Baker Rejuvenation Centre in Victoria.

Cosmetic results of Botox injections are typically seen in two to four days, with full effect apparent after two weeks, lasting for approximately three to six months in total. Botox injections are relatively painless, safe and brief, with few associated side effects. However, Botox is not a permanent fix: as





the effects wear off most individuals will require additional Botox treatments to eliminate wrinkles and lines as they reappear.

The cost of Botox injections varies depending on the number of zones injected, but those opting for the procedure can expect to pay anywhere between \$400 and \$1,200 per session.

DERMAL FILLERS

As we age, natural facial volume breaks down, causing skin to lose suppleness and elasticity. This breakdown also causes the skin to wrinkle and sag.

This is where dermal fillers prove useful. Injecting fillers, such as hyaluronic acid, replenishes the skin with a new supply of volume, and because it naturally occurs in the body the procedure is quite safe and has relatively few side effects.

Dermal fillers are useful for remedying minor imperfections in facial skin, such as laugh and

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smoker's lines, wrinkles, crow's feet, creases, and acne scars. It can also be used to promote supple skin, pronounced cheeks, and fuller and more defined lips.

"Filler adds volume from the inside," says Dr. Demianczuk. "You can plump things like cheekbones, lips and anywhere you have deeper creases or wrinkles, getting these areas back to their original fullness before atrophy set in with age."

Treatment is similar to Botox injections, with relatively little risk, discomfort or downtime, but the results of fillers generally last longer. It can also be used as a complimentary treatment in conjunction with Botox. That's because Botox and dermal fillers do similar, but different, things. While Botox works on muscles to smoothen skin, dermal fillers provide increased volume. As such, both are often used together to achieve natural results.

"Aging well requires a multi-faceted approach including lifestyle improvement and anti-aging treatments provided by medical professionals," says Rachel Varga, Clinical Nurse Specialist at Baker Rejuvenation Centre in Victoria. "The right combination of treatments can restore previous facial features, and we routinely help our patients look about five to 10 years younger."

Like Botox, the effects of dermal fillers are not permanent, but they generally last longer — anywhere from six months to two years. A dermal filler procedure takes approximately one hour, and can cost anywhere between \$1,000 and \$5,000, depending on the number of zones treated.

HYDRAFACIAL™

HydraFacial™ is a soothing, moisturizing, non-invasive and non-irritating procedure that simultaneously combines cleansing, exfoliation, extraction, hydration and antioxidant protection, resulting in clearer, more vibrant skin with no discomfort or downtime. It is an ideal skincare treatment for anyone looking to improve and maintain the health of their skin on a regular basis.

Specifically, HydraFacial™ can enhance skin tone and texture, reducing the appearance of fine lines and hyperpigmentation. It can improve the appearance of dry or dehydrated skin, blemishes, sun damage, and oily or acne-prone skin.

"You could equate the Hydrafacial to a 'wet vac' for the face," says Varga. "It delivers simultaneous

Hydrafacial™ can enhance skin tone and texture, reducing the appearance of fine lines and hyperpigmentation.

exfoliation and hydration to the skin. The procedure is painless with no side effects or downtime.” She adds, “This is a good first treatment for anyone unfamiliar with cosmetic procedures.”

It’s relatively affordable, too. Treatment costs range between \$175 and \$200 per session.

CHEMICAL PEELS

Kicking it up a notch from HydraFacial™ is chemexfoliation, also known as derma-peeling.

A chemical peel involves the application of a chemical solution to the skin, causing the outer layer to blister and sluff off, similar to a sunburn, but without the same degree of discomfort and skin damage. Like a sunburn, most individuals



experience some redness, followed by scaling that occurs within three to seven days. Once the outer layer of skin is removed a new underlying layer of skin is revealed that is smoother and less wrinkled than the removed layer.

Chemical peels are non-surgical techniques that can improve the appearance of facial skin, as well as that of the neck and hands. It can reduce the appearance of several skin conditions, including fine lines around the eyes and mouth, wrinkles due to sun damage and aging, the appearance of minor scars, acne, age spots, freckles, and dark spots, among others.

“Chemical peels are very effective,” says Dr. Demianczuk. “The procedure can be done in our office at False Creek Healthcare Centre, with only a



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Non-invasive skin care treatments, such as Botox, derma fillers, Hydrafacial, chemical peels, and laser resurfacing, can significantly improve facial appearance. iStock photo

bit of downtime involved — usually some redness and tightness.” However, he cautions that chemical peels are not for everyone: “Skin discoloration can be a problem for some people, especially dark-skinned people of Asian, African or East Indian descent.”

The results of a chemical peel typically last for three months, with repeat treatments required as needed to maintain. Cost per treatment is generally between \$175 and \$200 per session.

FOTONA LASER RESURFACING

Laser resurfacing procedures target specific skin areas of concern by focusing a short, concentrated pulsating beam of light on them. This allows precision removal of skin, layer by layer. Laser resurfacing procedures are also known as laser vaporization or laser peel.

One promising new type of technology is Fotona laser resurfacing, which can effectively re-surface the skin with, or without, surgical removal of tissue. Fotona uses a laser with adjustable settings that offer different treatment options to suit a patient’s particular skin type and concerns.

“The Fotona laser is unique as it allows us to

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vaporize the top layer of skin, to reveal beautiful and glassy looking skin, improve collagen, and reduce pore size. We can even treat delicate areas around the eyes, nose and lips, which are missed by most lasers,” says Varga. “We can also customize the depth and length of downtime depending on your personal schedule.”

Laser resurfacing is particularly useful for addressing wrinkles, lines, skin laxity, and uneven tone, as well as reducing or eliminating blemishes, acne scars and other skin irregularities.

A Fotona laser resurfacing treatment lasts approximately 45 minutes, costing anywhere from \$650 to \$2,000, depending on the number of treatments.

COOLSCULPTING

CoolSculpting is a revolutionary non-surgical procedure that involves precise freezing and destroying of fat cells below the skin’s surface. Unlike liposuction, CoolSculpting is not intended for dramatic weight loss. Instead, it is useful for treating stubborn areas of fat — belly, love handles, back, arms, and under the chin — that can be resistant to diet and exercise. Results vary, but most

individuals can anticipate a 22% to 23% fat loss in targeted areas after just one session.

Liposuction is certainly more effective for achieving dramatic results, but there are pros and cons to surgery, not least of which is a recovery period that can last anywhere from several days to a couple of weeks.

“Not everyone is a candidate for liposuction,” says Varga. “CoolSculpting is a non-invasive alternative, ideal for those who are within 10 to 20 pounds of their ideal weight.”

What is more, CoolSculpting sessions take between one to three hours, depending how many areas are being treated, during which time individuals can work on their laptop, read a book, listen to music, or take nap. The procedure is quite safe, and there are few side effects other than minor redness or temporary numbness in treated areas.

As with most cosmetic treatments, cost varies depending on the number of areas treated, ranging anywhere from \$1,000 to \$20,000. **H**

The information provided in this article is not intended as medical advice and should not be relied upon for making treatment decisions. For more information, speak with a trained medical specialist.



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COMFORT FOOD BY THE COAST AT MINNOZ RESTAURANT

HOTELS RESTAURANTS generally exist to serve weary hotel guests who just want a good meal after a long day of travel or business. Most business travelers don't want to venture far from the comfort of their room, or think too hard about an exotic menu. Minnoz Restaurant in the Coast Bastion Hotel in Nanaimo certainly answers the call, but what is curious about this particular hotel restaurant is that it has become a popular dining choice for locals, too.



Minnoz Restaurant is renowned for its AAA prime rib dinner, available only on Fridays and Saturdays. Executive Chef Liam Callanan says generous servings, using fresh and quality ingredients, is what keeps hotel guests and locals coming back, again and again.

My wife, Heather, and I discovered why on a recent trip up Island. After a long, hot day on the road we were glad to check into our spacious hotel room, take a nap, and freshen up before dinner. Neither of us was in a mood to go wandering around the downtown core in search of a restaurant, so we decided to head downstairs and give Minnoz a try.

The first thing we notice is the elegant, contemporary décor, which is both modern and cozy. The restaurant's funky bar is particularly inviting, but Heather and I decide we'd instead prefer an intimate table with a view of the water. (One nice thing about Minnoz is the amount of window seating offering spectacular views of the Nanaimo harbourfront.)

After settling in, we order a couple of libations and start poring over the menu while taking in our surroundings. It's a busy Friday night and the mood in Minnoz is light and familiar. Listening to the tables around us, it becomes apparent that most of the guests are locals who have cottoned on to a good thing.

When it's time to order appies Heather goes straight for the seafood items on the menu, ultimately deciding on pan-fried chili lime prawns. Her call is superb and I'm envious when the tangy red prawns arrive at the table. Of course, good woman that she is, she shares her order with me, making the sweet heat of juicy prawn taste all the sweeter.

Reciprocating the kindness, I share my order of butter-seared scallops on house-smoked maple pork belly bacon and lemon-butter maple syrup. Each scallop is juicy and tender, cooked to delicate perfection, complemented by the sweet, salty and smokey flavour of bacon. I pair it with a glass of White Bear Riesling from the Okanagan and the combination is perfect. As always, Heather and I debate who ordered best, but both appies are different and delightful in their own right, so we call it a draw.

Pleased with her prawns, Heather decides to stick with shellfish for her main course, ordering the lobster ravioli with prawns, wild mushroom garlic cream, spinach, truffle oil, and Grana Padano cheese. A nice buttery Chardonnay would complement this rich dish, but Heather is not a fan of oaked wine so she copies me with a glass of White Bear Riesling instead. The fruity, high acid wine cuts through the rich, creamy pasta like a steel samurai sword through butter. A happy sigh suggests the contrast is sublime.

Minnoz is renowned for a number of other seafood dishes on the menu, notably grilled salmon, halibut, and seafood bouillabaisse, but I'm in the mood for something more substantial this night. Our server assures me that I won't go hungry with the AAA prime rib served with homemade jus, Yorkshire pudding, smashed potatoes and the restaurant's own signature horseradish. Served only on Fridays and Saturdays, the prime rib dinner is one of the reasons so many locals flock to Minnoz on weekends.

I can see why: the large prime rib is cooked pink throughout and smothered in jus on a sizeable bed of smashed potatoes that guarantee I won't go away hungry. My first instinct is to pair the dish with a typical Aussie Shiraz, but when I spy Noble Ridge Meritage from the Okanagan on the wine list I decide to give that a shot instead. And so much the better! The rich, juicy blend is the ideal dance partner for a meaty hunk of prime rib.

By the time Heather and I have polished off our main courses there isn't much room left for dessert. Still, it's hard to resist the siren song of Nanaimo Bar Cheesecake. Heather hesitates, so I spare her the angst and order one for both of us to share. My



A Minnoz Restaurant favourite is the Nanaimo Bar Cheesecake — a tasty riff on the city's eponymous dessert.

sin is rewarded with first bites of creamy, gooey delight that look and taste like the classic Nanaimo Bar — but better!

Like so many other guests, we drag out the evening a little bit longer with a specialty coffee, enjoying the view of the twinkling lights on the harbour. Satiated and happy, we can return to our room for a restful night's sleep. And in the morning we won't have to venture far to find some of the best eggs benedict dishes on Vancouver Island! **H**

For information and reservations, phone 250.824.0167, or visit minnoz.com



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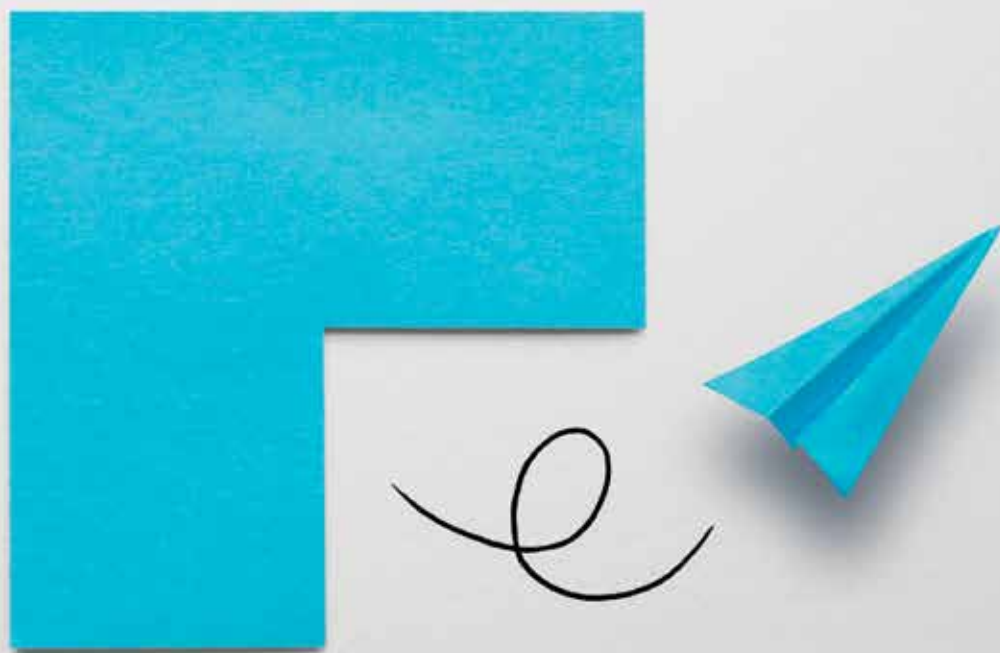


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