



PULMONARY HYPERTENSION  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION D'HYPERTENSION  
PULMONAIRE DU CANADA

## Lung Disease Patient Raises Awareness of Unique Vulnerability During COVID-19

**Wolfville, Nova Scotia (May 5, 2020)—May 5<sup>th</sup> is World Pulmonary Hypertension Day and takes place as social distancing measures have been in place for nearly two months. This year, pulmonary hypertension patient Jeannette MacKeen asks people to continue to make efforts to protect vulnerable people and help reduce the spread of the coronavirus.**

She is called the “Miracle Women” because of her positive attitude. 76-year-old Jeannette MacKeen has a rare and potentially fatal lung disease called pulmonary arterial hypertension, a type of pulmonary hypertension (PH). COVID-19 can worsen the symptoms of a chronic lung disease like PH and lead to more severe illness. Jeannette is also at higher risk of developing more serious complications from COVID-19 as an older adult. Jeannette’s life has become more challenging while she works to protect herself from the coronavirus.

“Keeping positive is what keeps me going... My lifestyle has not changed tremendously, but I can’t go for walks anymore. I live on a hill, so you can go down, but with PH, don’t try to come back up! I was walking in stores to get my exercise, but that’s not possible anymore. Sometimes being indoors is hard on my mental health. I sometimes feel down, but I know how to deal with it. I keep in touch with friends and family through videocalls and social media. However, since I am on my own 24/7, the biggest thrill I get is getting the garbage out!”

World PH Day is the opportunity to make people realize that we can’t give up on social distancing measures now, since vulnerable people—like PH patients—remain at risk of severe illness. To raise awareness, monuments across the country will be illuminated in purple on May 5<sup>th</sup>, including Niagara Falls and BC Place in Vancouver. The Canadian PH community will also participate in PHA Canada’s annual *#PaintCanadaPurple* campaign on social media.

World Pulmonary Hypertension Day is an annual global event to raise awareness of pulmonary hypertension (PH), a severe condition affecting the lungs and heart. PH affects more than 25 million people worldwide, including up to 10,000 Canadians. Over 80 international PH patient associations participate in World PH Day by organizing national awareness campaigns: [www.worldphday.org](http://www.worldphday.org).

### **Background**

#### **About Pulmonary Hypertension**

Pulmonary hypertension (PH) is a rare and very complex lung disease, which is progressive and potentially fatal. PH is defined by high blood pressure in the lungs, which leads to enlargement and weakness of the right-side of the heart—a serious type of heart failure. PH

can strike people of all backgrounds, ages, and genders. While there is currently no cure for PH, thanks to available treatments, many patients are living longer, healthier lives.

About the Pulmonary Hypertension Association of Canada (PHA Canada)

PHA Canada is a federally registered charity whose mission is to empower the Canadian pulmonary hypertension community through support, education, advocacy, awareness, and research. PHA Canada has been working to better the lives of Canadians affected by pulmonary hypertension since 2008.

For more information, please visit: [www.phacanada.ca/worldphday](http://www.phacanada.ca/worldphday)

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