

# Pacific HeartBeat

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2026

## Life... by numbers

by a POHA member

**80** years. Or so I thought! My driving licence was in need of renewal at 78 years. During a routine transaction at ICBC, I was asked some health questions. Saying "open-heart surgery" did it. A form was proffered with instructions to arrange a physical from a doctor or nurse practitioner. So, be warned—80 comes early these days.

**150.** An unusually high systolic blood pressure reading—25 points over my daily average. Probable cause—takeaway pizza—with high salt content. Another addition to the No No list.

**2,190** blood pressure readings per annum

- Three readings—twice a day • Bi-weekly tally of figures to determine daily averages
- Scan of the results • Addition to a multi-page pdf • Email results to internist prior to consultation.

Being an open heart patient, with other issues, leads to constant monitoring—particularly frequent blood tests. **Bold** figures, on an otherwise bland laboratory report, mean that parameters have been exceeded. Expect a follow-up phone call from the monitoring authority and be prepared to explain yourself!

A urate level of **380** wasn't in bold—nevertheless it indicated an elevated level of uric acid. Think gout. Medical advice—to chill the heart of a meat eater—followed. The suggestion, a plant-based diet and teetotal lifestyle.

The result—scanning menus for previously scorned items, vegetative in nature, and learning to appreciate soda water. Purines are the enemy. They are even present in some vegetables. I still eat fish—though no crustaceans.

**800** calories per day. Having once endured a clinically supervised diet of fish

Driver's questionnaire.

Aug Nov	Sep Dec	18 25	19 26	20 27	21 28	22 29	23 30	24 31	Day 4 Evening	AM	710	PM	AM	716	PM	63	117	65	116	64
Feb	Mar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Day 5 Morning	AM	1025	PM	AM	335	PM	55	137	77	142	77
May Nov	Jun Dec	11 18	12 19	13 20	14 21	15 22	16 23	17 24	Day 5 Evening	AM	645	PM	AM	850	PM	55	150	78	142	77
Feb	Mar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Day 6 Morning	AM	630	PM	AM	730	PM	53	123	69	119	69
Aug Nov	Sep Dec	18 25	19 26	20 27	21 28	22 29	23 30	24 31	Day 6 Evening	AM	545	PM	AM	735	PM	56	118	65	113	70

Daily blood pressure readings.

and cauliflower, tuna are free to roam the Pacific untroubled by me! The weight-loss clinic has closed. No doubt semaglutides are a less onerous treatment.

**4,745** pills. The annual sum of daily medications and supplements, plus what seems like gallons of water. The number was higher—one prescription called for a 75 mg dose. My pharmacist cut up 100 mg tablets and supplied quarters and halves in separate containers. Talk about fiddly.

**\$100** per month—an eye opener. A new prescription—and a surprising cost. My pharmacist suggested an alternative and contacted the doctor who approved it. The result—\$25 per month—pew.

**\$2,100** for new hearing aids. In 2011, I paid over \$4,000! I am pleasantly surprised by the leap in technology. I had hoped for in-the-ear (ITE) aids but was told that over-the-ear (OTE) aids were better for me. OTE aids were a pain during Covid, often getting tangled with mask straps and spectacles.

A useful hearing aid feature is a phone app, allowing volume reduction in noisy venues. It has directional controls and Bluetooth enables discrete listening on an

iPad. When driving, my hearing aids convey GPS information—passengers are unaware of the instructions.

**\$820** for seven days of emergency medical insurance on an Alaskan cruise. Aging is an expensive pastime. Something to consider when I am confronted by a green salad, sunchoke soup, couscous cake and artisanal water!

**20,000** kilometres. Distance travelled over seven years to Langley Airport for air cadet training nights. To see a grade 7 child blossom into a mature, confident adult, is a blessing. **WO2** (Warrant Officer Second Class) is the reward and the badge is much coveted. ♥



Warrant Officers—746 Lightning Hawk Squadron.

## Volunteer Visitors

are needed. Visits take one to two hours; a flexible schedule is available. Training and support is provided by a team leader and hospital staff. If you are interested, contact a POHA team leader for more information:

**Nancy Farrell** • 604-442-7565 for St. Paul's Hospital. **Alfred Buchi** • 604-581-5508 for Vancouver General Hospital.

**Mike Martin** • 604-535-3195 for Royal Columbian Hospital. **Ron Paley** • 604-463-8815 for Feeder Hospitals. ♥

## Presentations and Donations

POHA visitors present poinsettias to heart patients at the surgical hospitals, during the Christmas holidays.



Vancouver General Hospital. L to R: Alfred Buchi, POHA Director, presents Perry Chow, with a poinsettia.



Royal Columbian Hospital. Santa Claus (Len Mueller) presents a poinsettia to a patient.



Donation to Ridge Meadows Hospital Foundation. L to R: Rhonda L'Abbe; Kristine Dixon; Ron Paley, POHA Director; and Janine Davies.



Donation to Vancouver General Hospital. L to R: Nancy Sweetapple, Manager for VGH—Cardiac Sciences; Sheila Byers, POHA Visitor.



Donation to Abbotsford Regional Hospital Foundation. L to R: Ron Paley, POHA Director; Lori Albertson, Assistant Volunteer Resources; Elizabeth Harris, Executive Director of the Foundation; Peter Langfield, POHA Volunteer.



Donation to Royal Columbian Hospital Foundation. L to R: Nikki Horne, Patient Care Coordinator; Dr. Brian Muth; Mandy Dhillon, Manager, Heart Surgery Ward; Mike Martin, POHA Team Leader.

## Don Topp Trophy

Each year the Pacific Open Heart Association presents the Don Topp Memorial Award to a person who has contributed in a meaningful way to the organization.

During the October 2025 Annual General Meeting, the award was presented to Jay Chambers. Jay is a volunteer visitor at Vancouver General Hospital. He has been a dedicated board member since 2019, serving for two years as president.



Donation to Langley Memorial Hospital Foundation. L to R: Tim Staunton, Director of Philanthropy; Ron Paley, POHA Director; Candice Lock (Patient Care Coordinator 1 North); Kiran Parmar (Clinical Nurse Educator 1 North); Andrea Woo, Senior Philanthropic Advisor; Mildred Parks, POHA Volunteer; Scott Farell, Interim Director, Clinical Operations. Donation will go towards a Defibrillator in Cardiac Care.



Donation to St. Paul's Hospital. Reg Kao, POHA Volunteer, presenting a cheque to St. Paul's staff.

**40th Annual POHA Golf Tournament** is scheduled for Thursday, June 11th, 2026 at the Delta Golf and Country Club. Further details to follow.



**PACIFIC  
OPEN HEART  
ASSOCIATION**

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<https://www.pacificopenheart.org>

### YES! I WISH TO JOIN THE PACIFIC OPEN HEART ASSOCIATION

I ENCLOSE ☐ \$10 ONE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP ☐ \$20 TWO-YEAR MEMBERSHIP

DONATION (OPTIONAL) \$

TOTAL \$

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/PROVINCE

POSTAL CODE

PHONE

EMAIL

I AM ALSO INTERESTED IN: ☐ BEING A VISITOR ☐ THE POHA GOLF TOURNAMENT

Please mail cheque to:

Pacific Open Heart Association, PO Box 45001, Ocean Park PO, Surrey, B.C., V4A 9L1.

Payment via e-Transfer can be sent to [etransfer@pacificopenheart.org](mailto:etransfer@pacificopenheart.org).

In the message area please specify "membership."