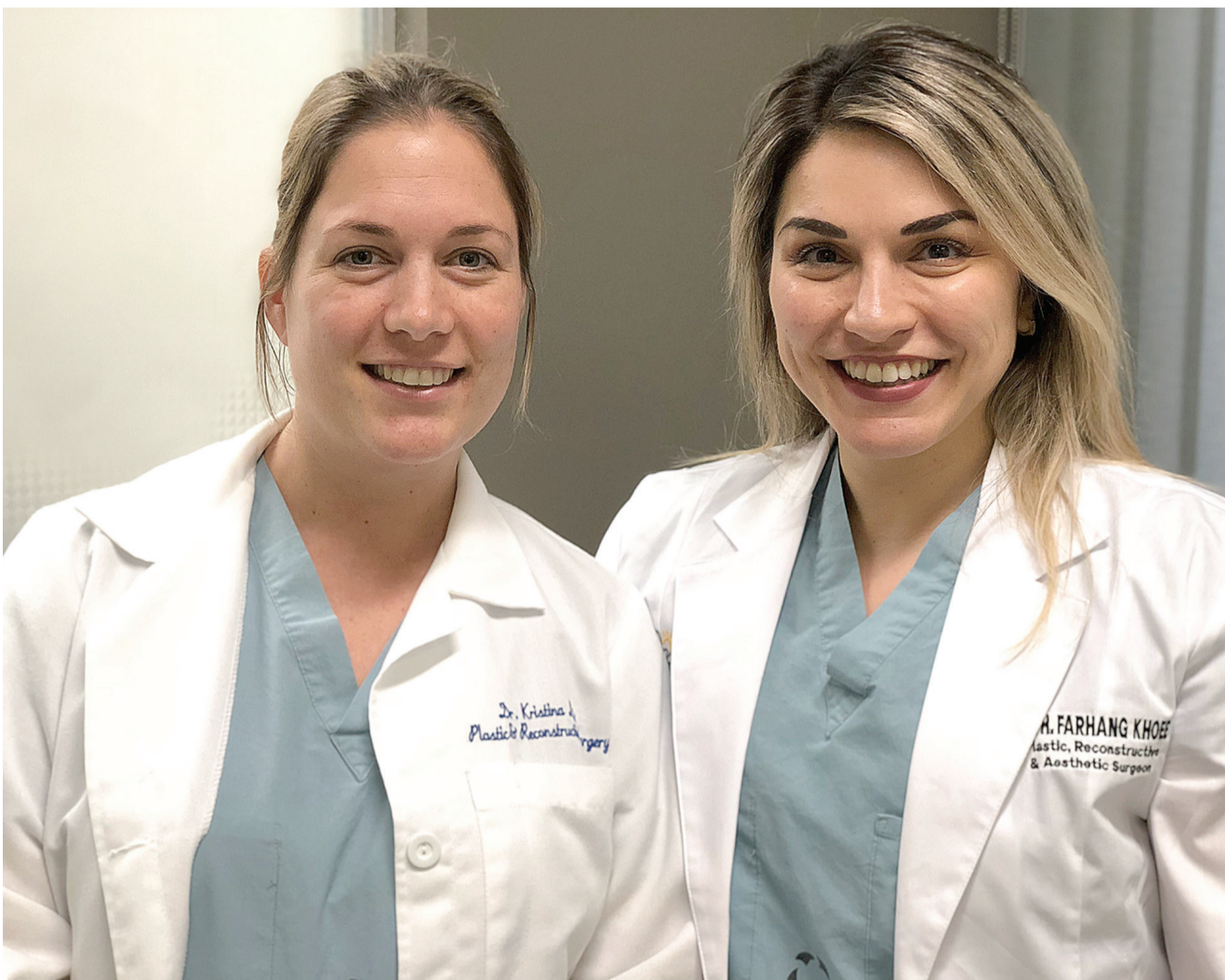


## Health and Wellness



Windsor Regional Hospital's Dr. Kristina Lutz, left, and Dr. Hana Farhang Khoee were honoured last week in Chatham by the Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program with Summit Awards, which recognize outstanding individuals and groups that are making a difference in the lives of cancer patients and their families. Photo courtesy of Windsor Regional Hospital

### Dr. Farhang Khoee and Dr. Lutz honoured with Summit Award

The Erie St. Clair Regional Cancer Program recognized outstanding individuals and groups that are making a difference in the lives of cancer patients and their families at the second annual Summit Award ceremony in Chatham last week.

The ESCRCP Summit Awards recognize healthcare employees or volunteers who are devoted to minimizing the impact of cancer and improving quality of life for the residents of Erie St. Clair.

Among the award recipients were Windsor Regional Hospital's Dr. Hana Farhang Khoee and Dr. Kristina Lutz.



**Erie St. Clair  
Regional Cancer Program**  
in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario

Dr. Farhang Khoee and Dr. Lutz are passionate about helping women in the region look and feel good about themselves after a mastectomy.

Since joining WRH's plastic surgery team last year, they have worked with the hospital to establish the Erie St. Clair region's first breast reconstruction program in over a decade.

With the establishment of this program, women in our region no longer have to travel to London or Toronto for breast reconstruction after a mastectomy.

Dr. Farhang Khoee and Dr. Lutz are now working to educate the community on their options by hosting presentations for medical experts and patients to learn more about the program and procedure.

## Can stem cell injections replace hip and knee surgery?

What should you do if the doctor says, "You need a hip or knee replacement due to severe arthritis?"

The time-honoured treatment has been a major operation to replace the injured joint. This may still be the best option for some patients.

But how many of these joints could be repaired by stem cell injections, thereby saving the potential complications of surgery?

Today, it's a question many people are asking.

Stem cell procedure is fairly straightforward. Bone marrow and fat are extracted from the patient and placed in a centrifuge. This separates valuable stem cells which are then



**Dr. W. Gifford-Jones**

**The Doctor Game**

injected into the hip or other affected joints.

Stem cells, our body's raw material, has the ability to develop into bone, cartilage, muscle, tendon, heart and other tissues. When

injected into a joint these immature cells provide a kick start to the body's natural healing process.

Proponents of stem cell therapy claim that chronically pinched nerves fail to heal because of a lack of blood supply, and that stem cells along with plasma-rich platelets contain growth factors that repair and create new blood vessels.

But how effective are these stem cell injections? Some patients say that within three to five days, there's relief of pain. Others claim they can immediately walk pain free.

Experts on stem cell therapy claim it's effective in treating meniscus and rotator cuff tears, carpal tunnel syndrome, herniated spinal discs, multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's Disease.

As you would expect, stem cell treatment is not without controversy. It's also hard to get unbiased assessment of the effectiveness of stem cells. Surgeons, of course, are trained to replace hips, not to inject stem cells into joints.

The Mayo Clinic and others warn that as many as 600 stem cell clinics are involved in cell injections. Not all are well regulated, and charge several thousand dollars for the treatment.

This prompted the Mayo Clinic to carry out a scientific double-blind study on patients who were suffering from arthritis in both knees.

The first group of patients was injected with tens of thousands of stem cells. To make sure they were getting to the source of the pain, the injection was monitored by ultrasound guided therapy. In fact, Mayo researchers counted all the stem cells injected which is a very expensive process.

Another group suffering from the same problem were given a sterile injection without stem cells. But none of either group knew whether they had received stem cells or the bogus injection.

The results surprised Mayo researchers.

This experiment showed that both groups were helped by the injection. Equally interesting, even the knee that did not receive the injection became less painful!

Once again this experiment shows the healing powers of placebo therapy. But it also left researchers unconvinced of the benefits or the lack of benefit of stem cell therapy.

So at the moment, evidence of stem cell benefit depends on who you talk to. No doubt this situation will change as more scientific studies are done. But if patients are considering stem cell treatment for a painful joint, it's currently not an easy decision.

I've asked myself what would I do if I were contemplating hip or knee replacement surgery.

I would first follow the Gifford-Jones Law, that it's impossible to undergo surgery without the threat of possible complications.

This may be a minor or serious post-operative infection that could prolong hospital stay. Or an injury to a nerve or blood vessel. Or on extremely rare occasions, death due to anesthesia or fatal blood clot.

If money is not a problem, I would explore stem cell therapy as current research shows the risk of complication is less than surgery. Moreover, I would not experience the trauma, or the long recovery period, both of which require extensive physiotherapy.

I must admit that it bothers me to pay for failed treatment. But if that happened, I would at least know that I had tried to avoid surgery. And I could cry over a beer about the loss of money!

This is exciting research and I'll keep you informed.

If any readers have had stem cell injections, please let me know.

For more information, please visit [DocGiff.com](http://DocGiff.com) or e-mail your comments to [info@docgiff.com](mailto:info@docgiff.com)

## It's flu season! Lower your risk. Get immunized

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit urges everyone over the age of six months old to get their annual influenza immunization and lower their risk of getting the flu this year.

The influenza ("flu") season is here.

It is important to remember that anyone can get the flu.

It is a respiratory infection, caused by the flu virus.

It can spread quickly and easily when someone with the flu coughs, sneezes, or talks.

You can pass it to others before you even know you are sick.



Flu symptoms include fever, chills, cough, headache, muscle aches, runny nose and tiredness.

The flu can result in very serious illness, especially for young children, older adults, pregnant women, and those with chronic conditions, such as cardiovascular diseases, asthma and diabetes.

Last year's flu season in Windsor-Essex County saw 304 lab confirmed cases of influenza and eight influenza related deaths.

"The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from influenza and its related complications is to get your annual influenza vaccination," says Dr. Wajid Ahmed, medical officer of health of the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit.

"The flu vaccine usually takes up to two weeks to work, so it is highly recommended to get the vaccine early, at the beginning of the flu season."

New this year, adults 65 years and older have the option of receiving a high-dose flu vaccine free.

The high dose vaccine provides additional protection against the strains of flu virus most likely to cause illness in this age group.

If you are over the age of 65 years, please talk to your doctor about which vaccine is best for you.

This year's flu vaccine will be available from your family physician, nurse practitioner, walk-in clinics and for anyone five years and older the vaccine is also available from participating pharmacies.

#### Public clinic on Nov. 16

The Health Unit will be offering a public influenza drop-in clinic on Friday, Nov. 16 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at the University of Windsor CAW Student Centre commons area.

This public flu clinic is open to all and a health card is not required.

The circulating strains of the flu virus changes from year to year and the flu vaccine is developed each year to match the most common strains; therefore, it is important to get your flu vaccine every year.

The vaccine is safe; reactions are usually mild, and may include redness, soreness, and swelling at the injection site.

The vaccine contains a weakened or inactivated form of the virus, therefore you cannot get the flu from the vaccine.

The Health Unit urges everyone to talk to their health care provider about getting the flu vaccine.

The flu vaccine is still the best way to protect yourself. Other ways to protect yourself and your family from the flu this season include regular handwashing, staying hydrated and eating a balanced diet, and getting plenty of rest and exercise.

Keep areas that many people touch clean, because the virus can live for several hours on surfaces such as doorknobs.

Lower your risk and get immunized.

For more information about influenza, please visit [WECHU.org](http://WECHU.org)

