

2026 AGM & CONFERENCE

The Scleroderma Association of B.C.'s 42nd Annual General Meeting and Conference Program.

Holiday Inn Express Vancouver-Metrotown
4405 Central Blvd, Burnaby, BC V5H 4M3
Saturday, October 24th 2026
10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Scleroderma Association B.C.

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Today's
Agenda

Registration

10:00 AM Doors Open - Registration Begins

AGM

10:30 AM Welcome and Opening Remarks
Cecille Soriano, SABC President

Business of the AGM, Reports, Election of Board of Directors
Amyn Rajan, SABC Treasurer

11:00 AM Raynaud's Phenomenon in Systemic Sclerosis
Presented by Dr Hyein Kim

12:15 PM Lunch

1:20 PM Lihong Yang Memorial Scholarship Award(s)

Arthritis Research Canada

1:30 PM SABC Research Program Updates
Presented by: Dr James Dunne & Dr Kevin Keen

2:15 PM Break

2:30 PM Maintain Your Mobility- Chair Yoga
Instructed by Teressa

3:00 PM Scleroderma Patient Panel
Featuring Cheryl McNicol, Kelly Grant, & Emilio Chiarizia
Moderated by Cecille Soriano

4:00 PM Closing Remarks
Chelsea Fitzpatrick, SABC Vice-President

4:10 PM Social Hour
Celebrate 42 years of the SABC

Conference Adjournment

A message from the **SABC PRESIDENT**

I am honoured to welcome you all to our 42nd AGM & Conference.

42 years, how incredible is it that for 42 years, this organization has been run by a passionate and hardworking team of volunteers. I have to take a moment and thank Rosanne and everyone who came before me for setting up this wonderful organization and community.

We've had a very successful year: raising over $200,000 for June Awareness, hosting fun events like the Ride / Walk for Scleroderma Research and the Groove for Scleroderma Dance, and hosting some great "Come Zoom With Us" sessions to support connection within the community. Our co-Vice President, Kelly, and I were also fortunate enough to attend the Scleroderma Canada Conference in Ottawa. None of this could have been done without the help from the SABC Board. Thank you so much for all your hard work.

As my first year as President of the Scleroderma Association of BC comes to a close, I feel it's important to share what I've learned:

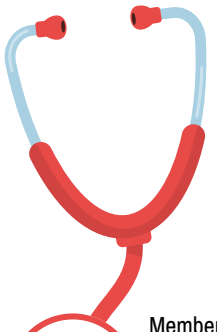
The future for Scleroderma patients is bright and hopeful. I've had the opportunity to meet and speak to so many scleroderma survivors this year and the underlying attitude is that no matter what is going on in our worlds', we're here to fight and we're here to stay.

There is so much research being done, not just in BC but across Canada that will impact our lives for the better. I'm very excited to see where we are even 5 years from now. It's all incredibly inspiring and the main reason I want to keep working with the SABC.

Thank you for being a part of this wonderful community. Together, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of those affected by scleroderma.

Cecille Soriano

Cecille Soriano
SABC President



HISTORY OF SUPPORTING PATIENTS

1980

Members connected over coffee or phone calls, sharing and learning. The semi-annual Sclerodata newsletter provided updates and tips, while annual workshops, in collaboration with the Arthritis Society, served as conferences for the community.

MEMBER COUNT: 27

1990

Member gatherings expanded with the inclusion of Community Representatives, individuals with scleroderma volunteering to provide support and guidance in their local communities.

MEMBER COUNT: 270

2000

The Scleroderma Clinic is established.[1] Sclerodata celebrates a member's success in obtaining WCB recognition and acceptance of their claim.[2] Annual local AGMs and conferences are held in the Lower Mainland.

MEMBER COUNT: 400

2010

SABC and Scleroderma Canada co-hosted a joint local/national conference in Burnaby, bringing together doctors, patients, and families nationwide. Members represented BC at various national and international scleroderma conferences

MEMBER COUNT: 800

2020

Come Zoom with Us virtual support group meetings enable everyone in BC to attend. Educational Webinars are also hosted online.

MEMBER COUNT: 1000

[1] The BC Scleroderma Clinic, a collaboration between SABC and Research Centre at St. Paul's Hospital, was the sole clinic of its kind in Western Canada, offering specialized care for patients across the province. This initiative created the potential to greatly improve the quality of life for scleroderma patients in the region, addressing a significant healthcare need. It is now a combined clinic with rheumatologists and respirologists for patients diagnosed with scleroderma and interstitial lung disease

[2] SABC member Nobby Breen, a painter, and his employer convinced the Worker's Compensation Board that scleroderma was a work-related, occupational hazard, resulting in the WCB accepting his claim and providing full compensation benefits. From SABC member Kelly Mauro, "It's impossible for me to put it into a few sentences. I can only simplify it with, if it hadn't been for Nobby Breen coming forward to Joan Kelly with his story, and then Joan having the amazing ability and foresight to communicate and understand how much sharing his story would impact not only my husband Rino and our family, but many more over the years, encouraging us to come together to help others having their claims accepted. I can't express how much the Sclerodata meant to so many patients and families. Patient outreach is at the core of what makes support groups and networking a success! I will be forever grateful and appreciative to the SABC".

Meet our

Researchers





Dr. Hyein Kim

MD, MPH, FRCPC

Dr. Hyein Kim is a staff rheumatologist at St. Paul's Hospital and Vancouver General Hospital (Mary Pack Arthritis Centre). She is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of British Columbia (UBC).

She practices general Rheumatology in Vancouver, but has a special interest in systemic sclerosis and works at the Scleroderma Clinic at the VCH Mary Pack Arthritis Centre and the Scleroderma-Interstitial Lung Disease Clinic at St. Paul's Hospital.

She obtained her Undergraduate Medicine degree at UBC, followed by an Internal Medicine Residency at the University of Western Ontario. She completed her Masters of Public Health at Harvard School of Public Health. She returned to Vancouver for Rheumatology fellowship.

Dr. Kevin Keen

Ph.D.



Kevin J. Keen, Ph.D., is a Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at The University of Northern British Columbia and an Affiliate Professor in the Department of Medicine at The University of British Columbia (UBC). He is also an Associate Member of the Centre for Heart Lung Innovation at UBC and St. Paul's Hospital. Dr. Keen has held visiting appointments with the Netherlands Institute for Health Sciences (Erasmus University, Rotterdam) and the Faculty of Medicine at Leiden University. He has published more than thirty peer-reviewed articles in journals, two book chapters, and two editions of a textbook on statistical graphics.

Dr. Keen's research involves the development of novel statistical techniques and cutting-edge computer software for the analysis of multivariate data in the study of complex diseases. He is the co-author of articles on lung and skin involvement in scleroderma. Dr. Keen is accredited as a Professional Statistician (P.Stat.) by both the Statistical Society of Canada and the American Statistical Association (ASA) and is a Fellow of the Royal Statistical Society.



Dr. James Dunne

MB, FRCP (C)

James V. Dunne, MB, FRCP(C), is currently on staff at St. Paul's Hospital and Vancouver General Hospital in British Columbia, Canada. He is a Clinical Assistant Professor for the University of British Columbia's Department of Medicine, and specializes in rheumatology.

Scleroderma and fibromyalgia are also among Dr. Dunne's clinical interests; he is a contributor to the book The Fibromyalgia Syndrome: A Clinical Case Definition for Practitioners. He has also been published in the journal Arthritis & Rheumatology, and other peer-reviewed journals. Dr. Dunne has the unique distinction of studying in four countries: Ireland, England, the United States (fellowship), and Canada.



Lihong Yang

Memorial Scholarship Award

Lihong Yang's battle with scleroderma was a courageous journey, made possible by a hematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT). These unsung heroes, found in our blood and bone marrow, played a crucial role in her fight.

In 2019, Lihong faced the daunting diagnosis of systemic diffuse scleroderma. Uncertainty loomed as she grappled with questions about her future, her loved ones, and her job. Both emotionally and physically, she felt broken.

Treatment attempts with Methotrexate® and mycophenolate mofeti (CellCept®) brought challenges like worsening acid reflux. Yet, amid the struggle, she joined the SABC's June fundraising program.

In 2020, Lihong consulted the Scleroderma Clinic, where HSCT was proposed as a lifeline. Despite the pandemic and complications involving her heart, her determination remained unshaken.

On January 5, 2021, her transplant journey began, marked by radiation, chemotherapy, and stem cell transplantation. While the road was tough, her spirit remained strong.

Following the transplant, she faced challenges but gradually improved, resuming physical activities and finding relief from heartburn. Unfortunately, her improvements did not hold for a long time. Lihong Yang lost her courageous battle with scleroderma. Her story is a testament to her strength and resilience in the face of adversity, and her memory will continue to inspire us all.

Lihong lost her battle to scleroderma on January 4, 2023. Her husband Songsen will
continue to honour her memory with the Lihong Yang Memorial Scholarship Award.

HISTORY OF RAISING AWARENESS

1980 Informational brochures and pamphlets detailing the impact of scleroderma were created for distribution at events.

1990 Participated in UBC's Health Sciences Fair which introduced medical students to patient members, providing valuable hands-on experience with a rare disease, leading to earlier awareness. [3]

2000 SABC and a Calgary-based support group joined forces to establish the national network of provincial support organizations, now recognized as Scleroderma Canada. Additionally, The Gurmej Kaur Dhanda Memorial Scholarship Award was presented to medical students showing dedication to scleroderma research.

2010 Annual province-wide walks and bike rides in June raise awareness and funds. The Bulletin, funded by pharmaceutical grants and created with Sclerodermie Quebec, contains updates on scleroderma symptoms, research and SABC events. It is also mailed to doctor and rheumatologist offices.

2020 SABC's website is continually updated with the latest scleroderma information, offering accurate resources for patients and boosting public awareness.[4] Additionally, SABC establishes a social media presence on Meta, LinkedIn, and Instagram platforms. Moreover, the Lihong Yang Memorial Scholarship Award supports two medical students dedicated to advancing their studies in fields related to scleroderma.

3 The Health Sciences Fair evolved into a society of volunteers called PIE, Patients in Education. The purpose of PIE was to provide opportunities for patients and community organizations to have a voice in the education of health professionals. SABC made a small annual donation to PIE and had representatives on the organizing committee.

4 Over 25 Information Sheets have been produced and placed on the website providing explanations, beneficial insights and current, credible information on the various aspects and symptoms of systemic sclerosis or scleroderma

Virtual Yoga for Scleroderma

Maintain your Mobility

HISTORY OF SUPPORTING RESEARCH

1980 Beginning as a grassroots effort, funds for scleroderma research were raised through tea parties, dances, casino days, raffle tickets, and entertainment book sales.

1990 SABC backed Dr. Connie Wong's scleroderma study at UBC with over $90,000, while BC patients joined the Canadian Scleroderma Research Group (CSRG) registry.

2000 Dhar Dhanda & family's annual gala supported the SABC Research Project and other scleroderma research in BC, The Scleroderma Skate events also raised funds for research. The SABC Research Program at St. Paul's Hospital intensified its study of scleroderma patients' blood and skin.

2010 With increased funds, SABC expanded support for national research initiatives at SPIN, the Scleroderma Research Chair at CHUM, and CSRG. Additionally, funds were allocated for acquiring an ultrasound machine and Doppler ultrasound for the Scleroderma clinic.

2020 The Joan Kelly Memorial Research Fund, established by generous donors, creates an endowment for sustained financial backing of scleroderma research. Capital is invested, with annual dividends dedicated to funding research in BC and Canada. SABC members have raised over $1.5M to date for this cause.



Gentle movement can make a meaningful difference for people living with scleroderma, helping to improve mobility, reduce stiffness, and support overall wellbeing.

SABC's Virtual Yoga for Scleroderma Series offers accessible, beginner-friendly classes designed with the needs of people living with scleroderma, arthritis, and chronic pain in mind. Led by Teressa, the sessions focus on gentle movement, building strength, improving range of motion, and supporting physical and emotional wellbeing.

At this year's AGM & Conference, Teressa will lead Maintain Your Mobility, a 30-minute chair yoga session featuring gentle, accessible movements to encourage flexibility, mobility, and relaxation. Participants are invited to move at their own pace and experience how simple movements can be incorporated into everyday life.

Interested in joining SABC's Virtual Yoga for Scleroderma Series? Classes are offered online and are open to participants across Canada and internationally.

To learn more or register, contact Teressa at pattess72@hotmail.ca.

Meet our

Patient Panel



Emilio Chiarizia

With a background as a small business owner, Emilio brings extensive experience in decision-making, leadership, fundraising, and community involvement.
Diagnosed with scleroderma in 2024, Emilio spent nearly a year seeking answers after experiencing early symptoms, including swollen fingers and Raynaud's phenomenon.
An avid cyclist, golfer, and yoga participant, Emilio has faced challenges staying active due to aches and poor circulation in his legs. He has since turned to yoga to help maintain his mobility and active lifestyle.
One of his proudest accomplishments was participating in Ride2Survive for ten years, a one-day, 400-kilometre cycling fundraiser from Kelowna to Delta supporting the Canadian Cancer Society. The initiative raised over $12 million with no administrative costs.
His involvement with the SABC has strengthened his understanding of the disease and reinforced the importance of awareness, education, and research.



Kelly Grant

Kelly was diagnosed with systemic sclerosis with morphea in 2006. Since attending her first SABC conference in 2007, she has found invaluable support, education, and connection within the scleroderma community. Inspired by her own experiences, Kelly became an SABC Community Contact for Chilliwack in 2019, completed SPIN/SSLED Support Leadership Training in 2021, and joined the SABC Board in 2022.
After retiring from 34 years of teaching in 2021, Kelly dedicated more time to supporting others affected by scleroderma. In 2022, she helped launch, organize, and facilitate SABC's Come Zoom With Us virtual support meetings. She also co-organized the Lower Mainland Moving to Cure Scleroderma Walk in Surrey in 2022 and 2023.
Kelly is passionate about patient support, education, raising awareness, and advocating for research toward a cure. She brings compassion, strong communication and organizational skills, and a commitment to strengthening the scleroderma community.



Cheryl McNicol

Cheryl is a recently retired business advisor living in Gibsons. BC. For over twenty- five years, she guided and coached hundreds of aspiring entrepreneurs across Canada to create viable, sustainable businesses by sharing her business planning expertise.
She was diagnosed with Systemic Sclerosis and Raynaud's phenomenon in December of 2024. Like many patients living with this autoimmune disease she has experienced extreme fatigue and exhaustion, joint pain and inflammation, digestive issues, skin changes, limited mobility and sensitivity in the hands and feet.
Cheryl's positive outlook and exercise regimen helps her to manage the day to day challenges that this disease brings.



Cecille Soriano

Panel Moderator

Cecille was diagnosed with scleroderma at just 19 years old after noticing unusual changes to her skin while backpacking through Europe. Despite the challenges of navigating life with a rare autoimmune disease at a young age, Cecille remained determined to pursue her education, career, and personal goals.
As her journey with scleroderma progressed, Cecille sought connections with others who understood the challenges of living with the disease. This led her to the SABC, where she found a supportive community and became actively involved in raising awareness, supporting patients, and advocating for scleroderma research.
Now serving as President of the SABC, Cecille brings her personal experience, compassion, and commitment to strengthening the scleroderma community. She believes that while the disease may affect how people live their lives, it does not define who they are.

Moving to Cure SCLERODERMA

TOTAL RAISED: $211,643.83

In 2026, we moved, grooved, and rode for a cure!

Congratulations for all of the efforts from our donors, walk & concert organizers, volunteers, and those individuals who raised awareness by Moving to Cure Scleroderma.

















Meet our 2026-2027
SABC Board of Directors



Cecille Soriano
President



Kelly Grant
Co-Vice President



Chelsea Fitzpatrick
Co-Vice President



Amyn Rajan
Treasurer



Karli Soriano
Secretary



Emilio Chiarizia
Board Member



Kenny Reid
Board Member



Amir Pourghadiri
Board Member



Emilie Wang
Board Member



Rita Jin
Board Member

Welcoming
2026 Board of Directors Nominee



Sheila Pittic
New Board Member

Thank You
For Your Service

We're sincerely grateful for the contributions made by our outgoing directors, Jorge Antunes & Carla Evdi.

Wishing you all the best in your next season of life!

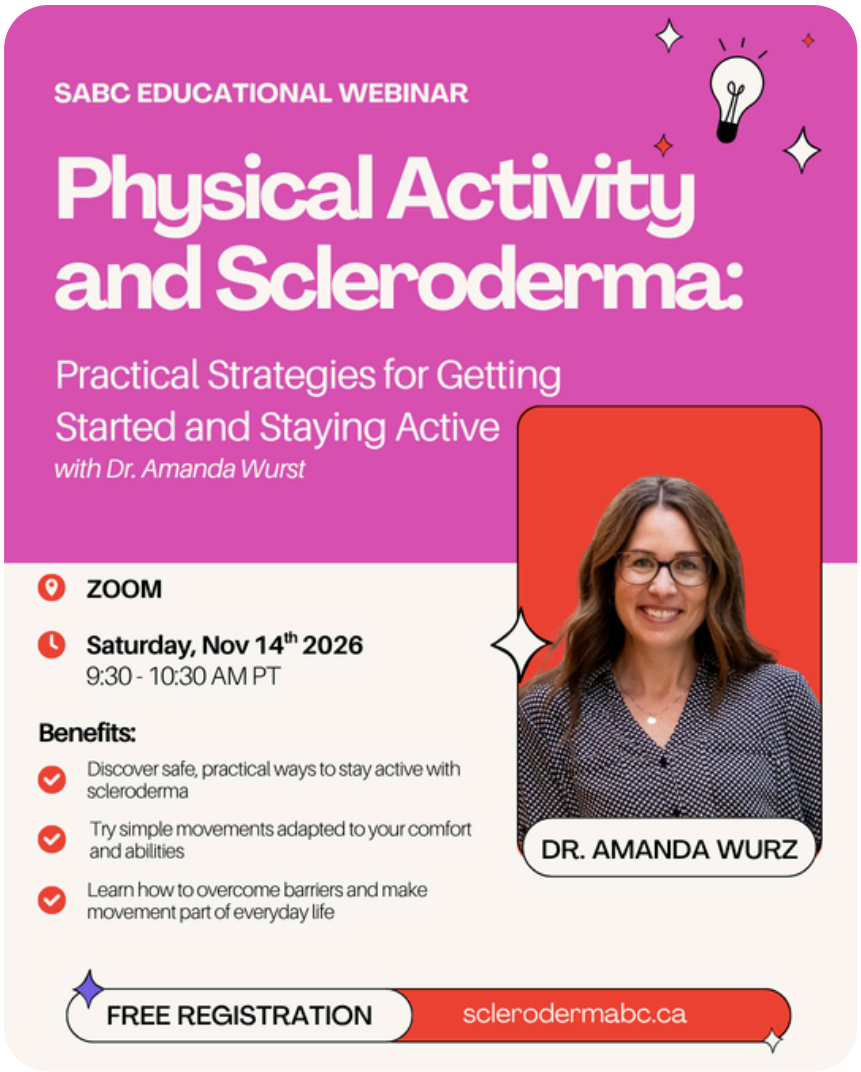
About our
Educational Webinars

Scleroderma affects everyone differently, and staying informed is one of the best ways to feel confident, supported, and prepared. The Scleroderma Association of B.C. hosts free educational webinars throughout the year to help people living with the disease, and their loved ones, access trusted, up-to-date information from experienced clinicians, researchers, and community educators.

Our webinars are designed to be:

- Accessible — free and online, so you can join from anywhere in B.C.
- Evidence-based — led by specialists who work directly with scleroderma patients
- Practical — offering tips, tools, and knowledge you can use in daily life
- Supportive — with time for questions and community connection

Whether you're newly diagnosed or have lived with scleroderma for years, these sessions provide clarity, guidance, and a sense of community.



Don't miss out!

Scan the QR code to register now for our next educational webinar!



Living with scleroderma can be challenging, but you don't have to navigate it alone.

SABC's Come Zoom With Us virtual support groups provide a welcoming, safe space for people affected by scleroderma and their caregivers to connect, share experiences, ask questions, and offer one another practical and emotional support.

Whether you're newly diagnosed, have been living with scleroderma for years, or are supporting a loved one, **we invite you to Come Zoom With Us!**

Support groups are facilitated by a team of scleroderma patients from across BC who have all completed the SPIN-SSLED program.

The SPIN Network is based in Montreal.

SPIN = Scleroderma Patient Intervention Network
SSLED = Scleroderma Support Group Leader Education program

Return-It Express Program

You can continue to raise money for SABC all year by using Return-It Express.

All you do is put your cans, bottles etc. in a clear bag, then get a label at the kiosk by entering 604 371 1005. It will print a scleroderma Association of B.C. label for you to put on the bag... and then your done!



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