



Cancer

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Key Partners

[Cancer Care Alberta \(CCA\)](#)
[Alberta Cancer Foundation \(ACF\)](#)
[Canadian Partnership Against Cancer \(CPAC\)](#)

[Cancer Research Institute of Northern Alberta \(University of Alberta\)](#)
[Arnie Charbonneau Cancer Research Institute \(University of Calgary\)](#)

Major milestones and achievements, 2023-2024

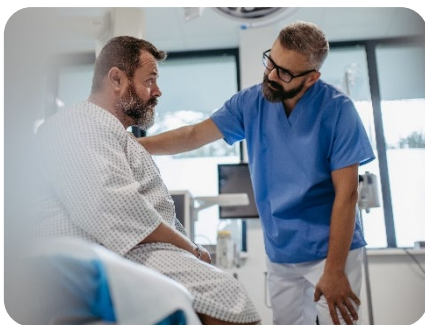
The Cancer SCN advanced several initiatives over the past year that aligned with the strategic directions outlined in our Transformational Roadmap. Our work has focused on improving care across the cancer continuum in Alberta through data, evidence and collaboration.

Clinical Pathways – Streamlining cancer diagnosis for Albertans

The implementation of cancer diagnosis pathways has demonstrated significant value to patients, providers, and Alberta's healthcare system. Collaboratively, the Cancer SCN, Cancer Care Alberta (CCA), patient and family advisors, and provincial stakeholders, including primary care, have spearheaded [two major pathway initiatives](#) this year:

- ▶ The [Head and Neck Cancer Diagnosis and Referral Pathway](#), now available via the [Provincial Pathway Hub](#), has been successfully implemented province-wide. The pathway offers clear guidance for primary care providers and dentists regarding appropriate referrals to specialty care. With its focus on minimizing unnecessary testing and improving access to specialized treatment, this pathway aims to enhance patient care while also reducing healthcare costs.
- ▶ A clinical practice guideline for oncologists/specialists, the [Metastatic Cancer of Unknown Primary Workup](#), is ready for use. This guideline, developed in partnership with patient advisors, primary care providers, frontline staff, operational leaders, medical oncologists, radiologists, pathologists and representatives from palliative and supportive care, is part of a larger initiative to address the needs of patients with metastatic cancer. The initiative includes developing and validating (i) a Metastatic Cancer Diagnosis Pathway for primary care, and (ii) a program to expedite diagnosis and offer earlier supportive and palliative care.

In addition, we have finalized the design process for the overarching [Alberta Cancer Diagnosis \(ACD\) Initiative](#) and have begun to secure funding for its implementation.



Perspectives of healthcare providers about cancer diagnosis in Alberta emergency departments (EDs)

In Alberta, many cancer patients receive their cancer diagnosis after visiting an ED. These patients are often at advanced stages of the disease, leading to poorer health outcomes and quality of life. This study, funded by the [Alberta Registered Nurses Educational Trust \(ARNET\)](#), explores how healthcare providers in EDs can better support patients with potential cancer diagnoses. Through interviews with healthcare providers in EDs across Edmonton and Calgary (including physicians and nurses), this study seeks to uncover perspectives and experiences about the cancer diagnosis process. Insights will inform the [Alberta Cancer Diagnosis Initiative](#), which strives to enhance early cancer diagnosis and improve patient and family experiences while achieving better outcomes.

This project is a collaboration between nursing staff at South Health Campus (Calgary) and the Cancer and Emergency SCNs. In addition to strengthening research capacity among frontline nurses and collaboration across health sectors, the study will provide valuable insights that can enhance professional practice, staff recruitment and retention in EDs and hospitals province-wide.

Impact on health, care, quality or performance

The Cancer SCN is leading transformation to improve care across the cancer continuum in Alberta by developing strong relationships with patients, families, research institutes, clinicians and operational partners. We have worked together with these stakeholders to positively impact cancer care in the province by:

- ▶ Implementing patient-centered initiatives and supporting programs tailored to diverse needs
- ▶ Supporting evidence-based practices to improve health outcomes
- ▶ Optimizing delivery of cancer care services through streamlined processes
- ▶ Prioritizing patient voices in decision-making processes
- ▶ Establishing mechanisms for continuous improvement to meet evolving needs

Additional work currently underway focuses on Cancer diagnosis models of care, [Community assets supporting cancer diagnosis](#), and Equity in cancer care access for underserved populations.

Other highlights

Game Changer Fund supports Alberta-based cancer research and innovation

In 2023, the [Alberta Cancer Foundation \(ACF\)](#) earmarked \$5 million raised through its “We Cross Cancer” capital campaign to support the Game Changer Fund, a dynamic research program designed to drive innovation, complement existing funding streams, and foster collaboration across conventional boundaries in cancer research. In partnership with the ACF, CCA Cancer Research & Analytics, and the Cancer Research Institute of Northern Alberta (University of Alberta), and with substantial input from Edmonton’s cancer research community, Dr Paula Robson (Scientific Director, Cancer SCN) co-led the development and implementation of this grant competition as a strategic initiative to bolster local cancer research.

The Game Changer Fund invited research teams in Edmonton to submit proposals addressing significant cancer research questions with fresh perspectives or creative approaches. Following rigorous peer-review that involved patient and family representatives as well as subject matter experts, four teams were awarded \$1.25 million each. [Fund recipients](#) were announced in February 2024, showcasing the innovative projects poised to make substantial strides in cancer biology and treatment, and reflecting the collaborative and forward-thinking spirit of the Game Changer Fund.

CANCER SCN

Publications & Grants



25

Peer-reviewed
Publications



36

Presentations & Workshops

Outcomes and Impact

\$3.1 cost savings
for every \$1 invested

(Colorectal Cancer Diagnosis Pathway)



8.7M

Research Grants



180

Research Members

Reduced maximum
wait times by 120 days

(Lymphoma Diagnosis Pathway)

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