



CANCER

Contact

[Leadership team](#)

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Key Partners

[Alberta Cancer Foundation](#)

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

[Canadian Cancer Society](#)

[Canadian Partnership Against Cancer](#)

[Cancer Care Alberta \(CCA\)](#)

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

“The Cancer Care Strategic Clinical Network is commended for the extensive work and collaboration carried out in developing the Future of Care Impact in Alberta (FOCI) Report. With a focus on the year 2040, the report positions AHS to look at future challenges and opportunities for models of care, health equity, infrastructure, and research.”

Accreditation Canada, 2022
Cancer Care Program Report

Major initiatives and achievements, 2022-2023

The Cancer SCN (CSCN) advanced a number of initiatives over the past year that are aligned with our [Transformational Roadmap 2020-2024](#). Our work focuses on improving care across the cancer continuum in Alberta through data, evidence and collaboration.

Future of Cancer Impact (FOCI) in Alberta

[The Future of Cancer Impact \(FOCI\) in Alberta Report](#), released in spring 2022, identifies key challenges based on cancer data and trends in Alberta and outlines 44 recommendations and actions to enhance cancer prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment and care and address known gaps. These [recommendations](#) include knowledge generation activities, planning, implementation and evaluation of targeted strategies, therapies, infrastructure, quality improvements, and are a call to action to enhance Alberta’s cancer care system.



The report and its recommendations span the full cancer continuum, focusing on: cancer incidence, prevalence, mortality, mortality, prevention and screening, diagnosis, treatment, management costs, supportive care, palliative and end-of-life care, models of care, health equity and childhood cancer. Currently, these recommendations are being used as the basis for discussion and action planning with cancer leaders and strategic partners, including patients and families, philanthropy, CCA, and other key stakeholders. Publications are also underway as a key part of an overall communication and engagement strategy. Ultimately, the goal of this work is to identify opportunities and challenges and to work together, through continued collaboration, integration and innovation, to reduce the impact of cancer in Alberta. [Read more about patient and family engagement in support of this work](#)

Alberta Cancer Diagnosis Initiative

The CSCN has partnered with people living in Alberta, primary care providers, health system leaders, and community organizations to design a first-of-its-kind provincial cancer diagnosis program. Funded by Alberta Health and the Alberta Cancer Foundation, the [Alberta Cancer Diagnosis \(ACD\) Program](#) closely aligns with provincial and national priorities. It will expedite and streamline diagnostic processes, optimize support for people facing cancer diagnosis and those close to them, provide resources and guidance for primary care providers, and ensure ongoing quality improvement to strengthen system efficiencies under a learning health system approach.

Over the past year, the CSCN engaged with more than 250 people representing diverse populations and a wide range of stakeholder groups. Together, we have co-designed the ACD Program, which will soon be presented to AHS leaders in 2023. An evaluation of the engagement and co-design processes has been conducted, and a manuscript about the use of pathways for cancer diagnosis in primary care has been recently accepted for publication in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. [Learn more](#)

Community assets supporting cancer diagnosis

Newcomers and people living in rural/remote areas have specific challenges when accessing healthcare, and cancer care in particular. With support from Alberta Health, and in partnership with Alberta’s Physician Learning Program, the CSCN is engaging with newcomers and people from rural or remote communities to understand community assets and/or strengths that could impact timely access to cancer diagnosis and positive patient experience. As part of this work, we are also exploring the mental models of primary care providers regarding cancer diagnosis for newcomers and people living in rural/remote communities, and are co-developing educational materials and clinical decision tools to support cancer diagnosis.

This work aims to identify ways we can better support newcomers and people living in rural and remote areas and improve cancer diagnosis and care in the community. By acting on what we learn from this study, we will contribute to a more equitable Alberta, ensuring improved cancer outcomes and care experiences for all. [Learn more](#)

Impact on health and care

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 to leverage available resources and expertise. We work together with these stakeholders to:

- ▶ Improve care experiences for patients with cancer and their families
- ▶ Enhance health outcomes for patients with cancer
- ▶ Improve efficiencies in the delivery of cancer care
- ▶ Ensure patient voices and experiences remain at the centre of all our efforts
- ▶ Build capacity to analyze and interpret cancer-related data and build a thriving data ecosystem to improve cancer care in Alberta

Other highlights

Cancer diagnostic pathways

The CSCN continues to support symptomatic patients suspected of having colorectal cancer and lymphoma by creating clinical pathways. These pathways ([lymph node assessment](#), [high-risk rectal bleeding](#), and [iron deficiency anemia](#)) have been implemented throughout the province with important impacts in clinical outcomes. Additional pathways are currently under development, including: cancer of unknown primary, head and neck cancer, and metastatic cancer diagnosis pathways.

Aligning community and cancer care with the needs of older adults

The CSCN has been privileged to have a health system researcher embedded in our work. Dr. Fay Strohschein, postdoctoral CIHR, Health Systems Impact fellow, Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary, has been collaborating with us to address age-related concerns to optimize care of older adults with cancer and their families, filling a critical need in Alberta. [Learn more](#)

Advancing knowledge for improved diagnosis of colorectal cancer in Alberta

For this study funded by the [Alberta Registered Nurses Educational Trust \(ARNET\)](#), the CSCN partnered with nursing staff at the Rockyview General Hospital (Unit 83) in Calgary to explore why such a high number of patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer is diagnosed in hospital. Findings will inform the development of a pathway to streamline the diagnosis of colorectal cancer in Alberta and a provincial strategy that supports facilitated cancer diagnosis. This study will also provide insights into approaches to increase awareness about colorectal cancer among Albertans and enhance nursing professional practice related to diagnosis and care of patients diagnosed with this type of cancer. The success of this partnership demonstrates the value of collaborating with frontline nurses in conducting research and improving cancer care in Alberta, which will be further explored in future initiatives. [Learn more](#)

"When I was first approached about this research project, I felt an overwhelming sense of inadequacy, despite my 14 years of bedside nursing... I had a lot of inaccurate assumptions about nursing research...it had never occurred to me, that this was something that I could be a part of.

Working in collaboration with [the CSCN] has given me the knowledge and confidence to get involved. I have learned that frontline nurses actually do bring a lot to a research project like this. The partnership between a frontline nurse who has the clinical knowledge and a researcher who has the academic knowledge is invaluable. There is so much potential to continuing to foster this style of research and I truly hope that other nurses can take those scary first steps to get involved. It is empowering to feel that your hard work can help to support change that can save lives and improve our healthcare system and I feel a renewed sense of purpose."

Ashley Watson, frontline nurse collaborating with the CSCN on the ARNET project

CANCER

Grants and Publications



16

Peer-reviewed Publications



21

Workshops & Presentations



\$2.4M

Research Grants



182

Research Members

Outcomes and Impact

A survey of community partners, working group and committee members revealed a high level of engagement with average ratings of:

4.4 out of 5 for participation

4.1 out of 5 for impact

Participants mentioned they "highly value working together as a team, open dialogue, sharing their insights, and the opportunity to listen to and learn from others" as what was most meaningful about their experience.

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