The Cancer Strategic Clinical Network (SCN) is committed to providing our Core Committee and stakeholders with updates regarding our projects and activities. For more information please visit the website at www.ahs.ca/cancerscn or contact angela.estey@ahs.ca

**Provincial Breast Health Initiative:**
The Provincial Breast Health Initiative continues to improve care for breast cancer patients, supported by refreshed education materials and a provincial measurement framework.

- Projects funded up to March 31, 2019 are concluding:
  - With implementation of the Same-Day Mastectomy Pathway, 46% are now performed as same-day surgery (2018/19 fiscal year to date). Data up to and including March 2019 is pending. Accountability is being transitioned from the project team to the Zones.
  - Management of the Diagnostic Assessment Pathway has transitioned to the Zones.
  - Provincial Breast Reconstruction patient education materials have been finalized and distributed to each of the Breast Health programs in the province.
- The Cancer SCN partnered with the Comprehensive Breast Cancer Program to optimize its patient navigation and expand navigation services to patients in northern Alberta. Implementation in northern communities is underway. This is a key enabler to the Enhanced Navigation project planned for 2019/20.
- Two breast cancer oncology clinics are piloting the Mainstreaming model – a new way of ordering hereditary genetic testing for breast cancer patients. Provincial implementation of the model for all breast cancer patients in Alberta is planned for 2019/20. This work builds on the February 2019 implementation of the Mainstreaming model for ovarian cancer at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre and the Cross Cancer Institute.

**Palliative and End of Life Care:**
The Cancer, Critical Care, and Emergency SCNs are surveying patients with oncological and non-oncological in advanced or end-stage disease to understand acute care utilization.

- Patients with advanced or end-stage illness frequently present to emergency departments, many of whom are in need of palliative care (PC) with unmet needs.
- A research study has been completed, in collaboration with the Emergency Medicine Research Group, to identify patients with end-stage disease who need palliative care and who present to emergency, determine frequency of their hospital visits, investigate ED provider and patient perspectives on unmet end of life care needs, and conduct systematic literature reviews on effectiveness of emergency department-based palliative care screening tools and interventions.
The research is being published and presented at local, national (Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians Conference, Halifax) and international conferences (World Congress of European Association of Palliative Care, Berlin) in spring 2019.

Accelerating the Diagnosis of Cancer:
This emerging initiative aims to design and implement a provincial cancer diagnosis program to expedite diagnosis and provide navigation, psychosocial and educational support.

- A proposal to develop and implement colorectal cancer and lymphoma diagnosis pathways was approved by Health Innovation Implementation Scale fund administered by Alberta Health. Next steps include:
  - Submission of a comprehensive project management plan for external review in April, 2019;
  - Establishment of provincial pathway design teams that include patients, providers and administrators in May, 2019;
  - Gathering data, evidence and patient and provider perspectives to inform pathway design in May, 2019; and
  - Recruitment of project resources in May, 2019.

- A survey on patient experiences with wait-times for cancer diagnosis is complete. Analysis is underway between now and May, 2019.

- Additional research underway includes:
  - A quantitative study on the experiences of Alberta patients and family members before receiving a diagnosis of cancer;
  - A qualitative study on the perspectives of health care providers on cancer diagnostic pathways in Alberta; and
  - A literature review on typical delays before diagnosis for colorectal cancer with emphasis on referral, and particular interventions to be explored in the Alberta context.

- We are exploring the development of a Alberta Cancer Diagnosis Program – a single point of access for primary care for all patients with warning signs, symptoms, and test findings that are highly suspicious of cancer. This program would:
  - Anchor rapid diagnostic assessment pathways for patients with severe symptoms or suspected aggressive or curable cancer;
  - House standard diagnostic assessment pathways for patients with mild symptoms, positive screening test or incidental findings;
  - Enable linkages to alternative pathways and programs for patients deemed likely to have a different diagnosis than cancer; and
  - Ensure patients have appropriate diagnostic work-up completed and direct them to appropriate programs and services.

Cancer SCN Research:
The Cancer SCN research team supports priority initiatives of the Cancer SCN as required. It also continues to engage with multiple stakeholders to identify and nurture research-practice partnerships, which will create and apply knowledge that improves cancer outcomes.

- The Cancer SCN is collaborating with researchers to understand the perspectives of Alberta healthcare providers on cancer diagnosis pathways and help identify areas of focus to work
towards streamlining the diagnosis of cancer in the province. This work aligns with and supports the Cancer SCN’s priority area of Accelerating the Diagnosis of Cancer.

- The Cancer SCN is hosting a practicum placement to a masters’ student from the School of Public Health, University of Alberta. Hilton Chan is learning about doing research in an applied setting while contributing to the Cancer SCN Accelerated Cancer Diagnosis Project.

- The Assistant Scientific Director supports ongoing work to improve cancer care in the province through collaboration with Improving Cancer and Chronic Disease Prevention and Screening by Engaging Patients through the BETTER WISE Project. The project is scheduled to be completed by March 31, 2021 http://www.better-program.ca/better-wise or email carolina.fernandes@ualberta.ca

- The Assistant Scientific Director is an active member of the Steering Committee of the AHS Research Challenge – Best Care Through Research. The AHS Research Challenge is a capacity building program for front-line healthcare providers. Successful teams are paired with an academic mentor and receive education and funding to complete small, clinically relevant research projects. This AHS initiative is designed to encourage and support inquiry, with the ultimate goal of enhancing care. http://insite.albertahealthservices.ca/tools/et/Page14153.aspx

- In January 2019, the Scientific Director collaborated with the Alberta Cancer Foundation by supporting its review processes, and chairing its scientific review panel for Letters of Intent submitted to the Cancer Early Detection Competition launched in Fall 2018. https://www.albertacancer.ca/document.doc?id=1260

- The Scientific Director supported the Alberta Cancer Foundation in its processes for reviewing applications made to the RK Dixon Family Award in hematologic oncology research https://www.albertacancer.ca/document.doc?id=1268

\Last updated: March 2019