

Cancer Strategic Clinical Network

Quarterly Update: March 2021

The Cancer Strategic Clinical Network (CSCN) is committed to providing our Core Committee and stakeholders with updates regarding our projects and activities. Copies of these updates and other reports can be found on our webpage: www.ahs.ca/cancerscn

Future of Cancer Impact (FoCI) in Alberta

One in two Albertans will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. The rising incidence of cancer and the growing numbers of cancer survivors, coupled with an ageing population who want to live well closer to home, are changing the way we think about cancer and the care people receive.

- Established the Future of Cancer Impact (FoCI) in Alberta Working Group to collate and synthesize what is currently known about cancer in Alberta as well as complete projections of future incidence, mortality, and survival. An overview of this initiative is available here <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/scn/ahs-scn-cancer-foci-alberta-overview.pdf>.
 - A report will provide projections of cancer incidence, mortality and survivorship in Alberta over the next decade; describe estimates of the numbers of cancers that may be preventable if risk factors were modified; describe topics related to provision of cancer care across the continuum including prevention, screening, early diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and end of life care; and discuss emerging trends in alternative models of care and needs of special populations.
 - Once the report is complete, the CSCN will undertake extensive engagement and consultation with cancer leaders and key strategic partners across Alberta, with the goal of achieving consensus on future cancer-related priorities for the health system.

Signs and Symptoms of Cancer: Public Health Campaign

Since the start of COVID-19, Alberta has seen a continuing decrease in the number of new cancer being diagnosed. Before the pandemic, approximately 2,000 Albertans were diagnosed with cancer each month. During the pandemic, there have been approximately 20% fewer diagnoses no matter where people live or their age.

- Together with Cancer Care Alberta (CCA), implemented a public health campaign to encourage the public to seek advice from healthcare providers when they have unexplained, new, worsening or persistent health changes. Visit ahs.ca/bodytalk or <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/cancersymptoms> for information on symptoms of cancer.



CSCN Innovation Pipeline

The CSCN Innovation Pipeline is establishing a process and criteria to help identify and invest in innovative ideas that align with the SCN's TRM. The Pipeline is a framework to describe the five steps for innovations to progress in the health system: idea generation; proof of concept testing; implementation test in Alberta; implementation work to scale; and implementation for sustainability.

- Established the CSCN Innovation Pipeline Working Group to develop a process and criteria to apply the Pipeline framework to cancer.
- Launched the CSCN Innovation Pipeline Grant Competition. This competition aims to invest in early stage innovations in cancer in three areas of focus that include: 1) priorities in cancer identified through James Lind Alliance (JLA) Priority Setting Partnerships, 2) priorities in virtual care and support for patients with cancer, 3) priorities in appropriateness of cancer care and supports. The competition will fund both performance gap identification, and proof-of-concept projects. Further details can be found on the [Cancer SCN website](#).

Alberta Cancer Diagnosis (ACD) Program Planning and Pathways

The CSCN seeks to build and implement a cancer diagnosis program with single-point access for all cancer diagnosis pathways, timely access to appropriate diagnostic work-up and referrals, and links for patients to appropriate supportive care and educational resources.

- Completed an inventory of cancer diagnosis pathways across all tumour types in Alberta. This inventory will highlight cancer diagnosis pathways that should be prioritized for implementation.
- Lymphoma Diagnosis Pathway
 - Implementation planning is underway with Lab, DI, and lymphoma teams in regional cancer centres in Central and South Zones
 - Ongoing data collection on volumes and outcomes for recently implemented pathway in Edmonton and Calgary Zones
- Colorectal Cancer Diagnosis Pathway
 - Implementation planning in Edmonton and Calgary Zones has been initiated
 - Draft referral checklists to support pathway implementation created with review by provincial working group.

Appropriate Use of Imaging

Frequent imaging has become a routine part of cancer care. With guidelines for imaging use in cancer, there is an opportunity to evaluate whether unnecessary imaging tests can be avoided and contribute to increased system capacity.

- Worked with Cancer Research & Analytics (CCA) to develop a Diagnostic Imaging dashboard. This dashboard will be used to identify opportunities to develop DI guidelines.

Appropriate Cancer Treatments near End of Life Care

Prognosis of patients with advanced cancer is complex. It can be hard for patients, families, and oncologists to decide when to stop treatment and instead focus on quality of life, symptom management, and palliative care.

- Reviewed data on systemic therapies used near the end of life to identify trends; review findings with provincial tumour teams; and identify opportunities to improve treatment practices.

CSCN Research

The CSCN research team supports priority initiatives of the CSCN 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.

- Reviewed current evidence and updated [COVID-19 Scientific Advisory Group COVID-19 Recommendations](#) (originally developed in Jun 2020 and revised in Feb 2021) on suitability of patients with cancer who are infected with COVID-19 for starting or resuming cancer treatment.
- Defined the set of quality indicators that will be used to measure progress and success in advancing our [Transformational Roadmap 2020-2024](#).
- Advanced relationships with academic partners.
 - The CSCN is hosting a practicum student from the School of Public Health, University of Alberta. Hyejun Kim is finishing her Masters of Public Health, specialization in health policy and management.
 - The CSCN co-developed and submitted an application to the [CIHR Health System Impact Fellowship \(HSIF\) program](#) with Dr. Fay Strohschein, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Calgary, under the academic supervision of Dr. Sandra Davidson, Professor and Dean, Faculty of Nursing. If successful, the work will help address the needs and concerns of older Albertans with cancer and their families.
- Collaborated with Dr. Lee Green and his team at the University of Alberta to understand family physicians' mental models of using clinical pathways for cancer diagnosis. Findings from this project will assist in informing the CSCN on strategies that ensure the successful implementation of clinical pathway work in the primary care setting.
- Partnered with Cancer Research & Analytics (CCA) to identify a potential shortfall of new cancer diagnoses in Alberta following declaration of the global pandemic of COVID-19 in March 2020. In addition to a public health campaign, two scientific manuscripts describing the use of administrative health data to model potential surges in cases were completed. Links will be posted on the CSCN webpage once available.