

Alberta Cancer Diagnosis (ACD) Initiative: Program and Pathways

ACD is a provincial program of work funded by Alberta Health and pharmaceutical companies. It includes engagement and design of an ACD Program and new cancer diagnosis pathways

ACD Program

If implemented, the Program will anchor all new diagnosis pathways linked to central intake programs such the Alberta Surgical Initiative and Diagnostic Imaging and will provide a single point of access for patients and primary care.

- The ACD Business Case is complete and was endorsed by the Clinical Operations Executive Committee (May 24). We are working to prepare for the funding decision (targeting Sept 2023).
- Health Systems Knowledge & Evaluation conducted an evaluation of the engagement and codesign process involved in the creation of the ACD program. We are currently working on a peer-reviewed publication resulting from that work that will discuss the factors that facilitated engagement.
- Analysis of information collected in engagement with the newcomer/immigrant population is complete. A report describing their perspectives, experiences and particular needs during the cancer diagnostic process is available upon request.
- A Working Group, co-chaired by CSCN and the Emergency Strategic Clinical Network (ESCN), is being launched in June to develop referral processes for unattached patients presenting with symptoms suspicious of cancer in emergency departments to the ACD program.
- Nine abstracts have been submitted to the Canadian Cancer Research Conference about engagement and design, and pathway work.
- An article has been accepted for publication in the *CMAJ Open*: Pujadas Botey, A., Barber, T., Robson, P. J., O'Neill, B. M., & Green, L. A. (2023). Using Care Pathways for Cancer Diagnosis in Primary Care: A Qualitative Study to Understand Family Physicians' Mental Models. *CMAJ Open*, 11(3), E486-E493. doi:10.9778/cmajo.20220084
- In collaboration with the ESCN, we have secured funding from the Alberta Registered Nurses Educational Trust (ARNET) for a 12-month project to understand the perspectives of healthcare providers in Alberta emergency departments about cancer diagnosis.

ACD Pathways

In addition to the ACD Program, tumour specific cancer diagnosis pathways are being developed and implemented.

Colorectal Cancer Diagnosis Pathway

- The Iron Deficiency Anemia (IDA) and High-Risk Rectal Bleeding (HRRB) pathways have been implemented in Edmonton and Calgary.
- Discussions underway to initiate expansion provincially.

- The CSCN is looking at potential solutions to address pathway uptake within the ACD initiative.

Other Cancer Diagnosis Pathways

- Pathways are being developed for Cancer of Unknown Primary (CUP), Head and Neck cancer, and Bladder cancer. Metrics and pathway algorithms are being created and will be tested with patient and provider groups.
- Participated on a Working Group to develop a provincial primary care PSA clinical pathway.
- The CSCN and CCA Operations are working on and will co-lead an operational plan to implement Metastatic Cancer clinics. This program will ensure expedited flow of later stage cancer patients within the cancer system (Palliative care and systemic therapy). The Metastatic Cancer (MET) Diagnosis Pathway Working Group next meeting later in the Fall.
- A manuscript has been published in Lymphoma and Leukemia discussing the economic impact of the [Lymphoma Diagnosis Program](#).

Community Assets Supporting Cancer Diagnosis

The CSCN is working to identify and describe which assets and strengths support early cancer diagnosis for those living in rural/remote communities and with newcomers.

- In partnership with the Physician Learning Program (PLP), the CSCN will interview Primary Care providers, newcomers, and people living in five rural/remote communities in Alberta: Athabasca County, Mayerthorpe, High Level, Taber, and Pincher Creek.
- Two focus groups and 25 interviews have been completed to inform qualitative research, Cognitive Task Analysis (Potworowski & Green, 2016) and to use co-design principles to achieve three high-level goals:
 - Understand and document community assets that impact access of people living in rural/remote communities and newcomers to timely cancer diagnosis and positive patient experience during the diagnostic process.
 - Explore the mental models of cancer diagnosis process held by primary care providers working with people living in rural communities and Primary Care providers working with newcomers.
 - Co-develop and evaluate educational materials and/or clinical decision support tools for these Primary Care providers and their patients to support cancer diagnosis.

CSCN Research

The research team supports priority initiatives of the CSCN- weaving research throughout all major projects. It engages multiple stakeholders to identify and nurture research-practice partnerships, to create and apply knowledge that improves cancer outcomes. In addition to the research activities and outputs described in previous sections, the following work is underway.

Partnerships

- With Unit 83 at the Rockyview General Hospital (Calgary), the CSCN is conducting an ARNET-funded project to explore why so many patients are diagnosed in hospital, rather than by primary care. Participant recruitment and data collection is underway.
- Dr. Anna Santos Salas, Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta is conducting a systematic review to inform future interventions to reduce disparities in access to cancer care and improve cancer outcomes in underserved populations in Alberta.
- Five students from the Public Health Master's program were mentored. Their project described 'healthcare consumers of the future' (millennials) and how the Alberta healthcare system could prepare to successfully address their needs. In addition to guiding the research project, we arranged an "Ask Me Anything" session with David Dyer (Executive Director, Cross Cancer Institute) to provide the students with valuable insights into today's reality of running a tertiary cancer centre. This program of work will inform forward-looking discussions about our SCN work, as well as the work of AHS and the broader healthcare system.
- With Applied Research and Patient Experience Division of Cancer Research & Analytics within Cancer Care Alberta, the CSCN is preparing a publication of age-analysis of the Ambulatory Oncology Patient Satisfaction Survey.

Knowledge Translation

- Facilitated a panel discussion at the Canadian Network on Aging and Cancer Conference. The panel included patient, caregiver, and provider perspectives on treatment decision making; and co-led a workshop on geriatric assessment to inform personalized treatment and care planning for older adults with cancer.

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