

Alberta Cancer Diagnosis (ACD): Program

The Alberta Cancer Diagnosis (ACD) initiative is a provincial program of work funded by Alberta Health and pharmaceutical companies. Once implemented, it will result in a centralized, coordinated provincial diagnosis program for Primary Care, system stakeholders, and most importantly, the people of Alberta. The program will anchor the province's cancer diagnosis pathways to central intake programs, such as Alberta Surgical Initiative (ASI), Provincial Pathway Unit (PPU), Diagnostic Imaging, and Emergency Departments, and provide a single access point for cancer diagnosis information for patients and Primary Care.

- Working Group, co-chaired by CSCN/Emergency SCN, launched to develop referral processes for unattached patients presenting with symptoms suspicious of cancer to the ACD program.
- Emergency Department physicians and staff engaged to begin to develop current state analysis, outlining how Emergency Departments support and/or confirm cancer diagnoses throughout the province. Analysis ongoing.
- In collaboration with Emergency SCN, the Alberta Registered Nurses Educational Trust (ARNET) is supporting a project to understand the perspectives of emergency department providers regarding cancer diagnosis. Five providers were interviewed as a part of the study and further recruitment underway.
- ARNET is supporting a collaboration with nursing staff at the Rockyview General Hospital to understand colorectal cancer diagnosis in hospital.
 - Information and psychosocial support patient education packages developed and available, in hard-copy (on Unit 83) or electronically (on Connect Care), for staff throughout the province.
 - Project presented at ARNET's donor luncheon event and to site managers of Rockyview General Hospital, highlighting potential of research-nursing partnerships on patient care and healthcare innovation.
- In collaboration with Health System Knowledge and Evaluation (HSEE) team (AHS), one peer-reviewed manuscript is being drafted, describing the patient engagement facilitation during the ACD program development.
- Six abstracts presented at Canadian Cancer Research Conference (Nov 12-14, 2023), including:
 - 1) Co-design of Alberta Cancer Diagnosis (ACD) program: Perspectives of immigrant survivors and caregivers on cancer diagnosis in Alberta
 - 2) Measuring time to diagnosis: Description of a method to detect increased healthcare utilization before a cancer diagnosis
 - 3) Engaging with Albertans to co-design the Alberta Cancer Diagnosis program
 - 4) Strengthening ethical considerations in co-design: Example of the Alberta Cancer Diagnosis program
 - 5) Understanding the unique needs and concerns of older adults during cancer diagnosis: Informing co-design of the Alberta Cancer Diagnosis program
 - 6) Attending to age-related considerations in cancer care planning and policy: Example of the Future of Cancer Impact (FOCI) in Alberta report
- Two peer-reviewed publications drafted, describing role of research in quality improvement (using ACD as case example) and needs and challenges of older adults in Alberta.

Alberta Cancer Diagnosis: Pathways

In addition to the ACD program, CSCN develops and implements cancer diagnosis pathways. This has included pathways for breast, lymphoma, and high-risk colorectal cancer, and additional pathways work is underway.

Bladder cancer diagnosis pathway

- Evidence review completed and membership list determined for the 'Bladder cancer diagnosis pathway' working group.
- Working group structure established and pathway design to begin early 2024.

Metastatic cancer diagnosis pathway (MET pathway) and Cancer of Unknown Primary diagnosis pathway (CUP pathway):

- In collaboration with CCA Operations, a MET pathway is being developed for decision. Engagement with CCA staff and leadership on the model of care is underway.

Head and neck cancer diagnosis pathway

- Pathway completed and posted on Alberta Referral Hub and Alberta Referral Directory.
- Pathway promotion and re-engagement completed in September to increase key stakeholder awareness and uptake.
- Ongoing data collection underway.

Lung cancer diagnosis pathways

- Wait times and biopsy data presented to CCA.

Genitourinary cancer diagnosis pathways

- Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) is supporting development of two genitourinary cancer diagnosis pathways and an ACD model of care to support organizations that work with, and provide care to, people vulnerably housed in Edmonton and Calgary. CSCN will partner with Radius Health (Edmonton) and The Alex (Calgary) to co-design models of care for cancer diagnosis.

Gastrointestinal cancer diagnosis pathways

- Completed full submission to Health Innovation Implementation and Spread (HIIS) Fund 3 competition, to streamline gastrointestinal cancer diagnoses.

Other

- Two abstracts presented at Canadian Cancer Research Conference (Nov 12-14, 2023), including:
 - 1) Lymphoma diagnosis pathway implementation in Alberta Health Services.
 - 2) Identifying colorectal cancer quickly with the use of high-risk referral pathways.

Community assets supporting cancer diagnosis

The CSCN is working to describe assets and/or strengths that support early cancer diagnosis for newcomers and those living in rural/remote communities. In partnership with the Physician Learning Program (PLP), the CSCN is engaging newcomers (people who have moved to Canada within the last 7 years) and people in five rural/remote communities including Athabasca County, Mayerthorpe, High Level, Taber, Whitecourt, and Pincher Creek.

- Qualitative research, Cognitive Task Analysis, and Human Centered Design methods are being used to achieve three high-level goals:
 - Understand and document community assets that impact the 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/remote communities and newcomers.
 - Co-develop and evaluate educational materials and/or clinical decision support tools for primary care providers and their patients to support cancer diagnosis.
- 17 newcomers and 26 rural community members interviewed. Community member interviews have reached saturation and formal interviewee recruitment will stop.
- Human Centre Design: 10 primary care providers (who serve newcomers) and 7 primary care providers (who serve rural communities) recruited. All provider interviews are now complete.
- Cognitive Task Analysis: 10 interviews (with providers who serve newcomers) and 7 interviews (with primary care providers who serve rural communities) completed; all interviews for this stage of the project are complete.
- Advisory Committee held and preliminary findings on the newcomer community member interviews shared.

Equity in Cancer Care access for underserved

In partnership with Dr. Anna Santos Salas (Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta) the CSCN is supporting ongoing research to inform the development of interventions aimed at reducing disparities in access to cancer care and improving cancer outcomes in underserved populations in Alberta. This work supports CSCN's strategic directions 2024-2027.

- Peer-reviewed publication drafted and in review with CSCN team. Publication focuses on international systematic review of interventions to improve access to cancer care in underserved populations throughout the cancer care continuum.
- Practicum student from School of Public Health at University of Alberta recruited, exploring the implementation and effectiveness of promising interventions in the Alberta context.

Research and innovation funding and partnerships

The CSCN pursues funding opportunities for research and strategically identifies research-practice partnerships to support the generation and application of knowledge that will improve cancer care and cancer outcomes across Alberta.

Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Health System (PRIHS) 8

- Submission, led Dr. Linda Watson (CCA and University of Calgary), completed; focusing on use of digital patient-reported outcomes to enhance cancer care delivery in Alberta. Awaiting funding decision.

Alberta Cancer Foundation's Game Changer competition

- Submission, led by Dr. Anna Santos Salas' (Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta), completed; focusing on establishing a patient-oriented health equity research hub dedicated to improving access to cancer care for racialized populations in Alberta. Awaiting funding decision.

Additional

- Conversations facilitated between research team led by Dr. Nicole Culos-Reed (University of Calgary) and the CCA Supportive Care Team regarding implementation possibilities of exercise into provincial oncology rehab programming.

/Last updated Jan 2024