

Carol Craig

Family Advisor, MSW - Psychiatric Social Worker (retired)

Patient – Esther Harris - mother



I am an only child and sole family support for my mother, who was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma in 2003 in BC, and was told she “was ineligible for treatment as any treatment would kill her”. She moved to Calgary in 2004 and was seen by a hematologist at Tom Baker and completed 3 chemotherapy treatments (2005, 2007, and 2010). In May 2008, she underwent a successful bowel resection (stage 2 cancer removed). In 2011, she had forehead surgery for squamous cell tumors, followed by 6 courses of radiation (2011-13). On February 8, 2014 she passed away.

I mostly accompanied my mother to appointments at the Tom Baker Centre, and she often felt weak, nauseous, anxious, and fearful. She was weak and nauseous from the treatment and the cancer. She was anxious and fearful about the disease and what was coming next. **Living with and treating cancer is an overwhelming task**, and leaves the patient so **very fatigued without resources**. I remember Mum having **difficulty sitting upright in her chair in the crowded, noisy waiting room**. All she wanted to do was to **lie down, be quiet, and try to relax**. A quiet room would have met those needs.

So the thing about the new cancer centre is that it will be a **building filled with hope and warmth**. This can be achieved by the **physical environment of open space, lots of light, warm colours, and easy access**. Cancer patients are weak and cannot walk far – **elevators should be close to the entrance, parking/drop off zones near the front door**, and adequate space without congestion of vehicles.

I would like to see a **very large and inviting lobby** (very much like the new Alberta Children’s Hospital) with a **manned information kiosk at the front door**. **Colour coded maps with department names at the entrance** and elevators close by. A **large open eating area** is also welcoming and works well. **Drop off lane should allow for many cars and be used only for patient drop off** – not deliveries. **Parking should be nearby**.

Requests: **#1 Emergency department for cancer patients only, #2 Clinics/phone centre for cancer patient questions about their health, #3 Patient quiet rooms** – comfortable chairs, desks and beds.

