

Rebecca Morlidge

Patient Advisor

I am a Project Manager for a Student Housing Company and the Co-Chair of the Patient Family Advisory Council.



At the age of 38, I was diagnosed with Stage IV Breast Cancer that had spread to my bones. I have undergone chemotherapy, radiation and five surgeries. Although I have spent much of the last 7 years in partial remission and thriving, I have also undergone 2 recurrences which have included a tumor-related compression fracture to a vertebrae and new active tumors in my liver. As a result, I am a frequent user of services in both the Tom Baker Cancer Centre and various other hospitals and clinics throughout Calgary.

One day a year ago, I received an appointment notice in the mail with my treatment schedule for the next two months. At my last appointment with my oncologist, I had explained to the nurse that I was not able to make morning treatment appointments because I could not obtain babysitting for my infant daughter until the afternoon. The nurse put in the “request” and I had to wait to see what I was assigned. I was shocked to see that my next 4 treatments were all morning appointments.

I had previously been told that appointments could absolutely not be changed, but I called the Tom Baker switchboard to explain that I simply couldn’t make these appointments. After much delay, I was transferred to the nurse manager who explained to me that there simply wasn’t enough room in Day Medicine to accommodate everyone’s scheduling requests. The facility was simply too small for the current demand. Also, there are no daycare options for patients. This put me in a very difficult position. I can’t bring my child to the treatment, but I also can’t change the appointment time. My only option was to miss my appointments. Fortunately, the nurse manager was able to get me an appointment that met my scheduling and daycare needs in the High River Cancer Centre one hour south of Calgary. So, I had to drive to High River for treatment. Not the best solution for me, but at least I got my treatment.

At the new cancer centre: My young daughter will have a fun daycare center to play in while I’m at the center for my many appointments. No more worries about whether I’ll be able to find a babysitter. Also, it will have ample space for my husband or my Mother to be by my side throughout my cancer journey – from the appointments with my oncologist, to chemotherapy/radiation and the occasional in-patient stay. Ample light and openness gives me a feeling of peace and hope. Don’t give us cramped, dark, uncomfortable spaces. Give us room to breathe and relax. And give us ample space for our family to share the journey with us.

Make sure that the new cancer centre has **room to accommodate the demands** that will be placed on it for its expected lifespan. Cancer is scary and painful enough. Patients shouldn’t have to worry about how to fit the necessary treatments into their lives. **Give us a safe and fun daycare** so we don’t have to worry about whose taking care of our children. Give the **staff ample treatment space so that patients** can be given options and some degree of control over their schedule.

Working together to deliver world class cancer care.