We chat with Dr. Verna Yu, President and CEO of Alberta Health Services, about the new strategies guiding the future of the organization and, most importantly, how they will benefit the health care of Albertans.

When children are pushed into masculine or feminine ‘boxes,’ the results can be harmful. Boys can ignore their sensitive sides, while girls may become passive. It’s time to change gender stereotypes.

“People who come to our rehab program do lots of exercises, but when the program is done, they go back to the couch. They don’t know what’s out there. If we offer this class and they like it, they’re more likely to be involved long term.”

— Elsa Posas

Occupational therapist Elsa Posas, left, leads Jaime Woods through an introduction to kung fu during a lunch hour exercise class. Posas and Woods are part of the Alberta Health Services’ Grande Prairie Stroke Early Supported Discharge team, which decided to host different exercise classes for staff each week during Stroke Month.

It’s scary when your child is sick, but in most cases you don’t need to go to the emergency department. If you’re unsure, we’re here to help.

Call Health Link at 811
Visit ahs.ca/options

Emergency is here for you if you need it. Use it wisely.
Setting a Course for Classes

The summer months are over and it's time to prepare your kids as they head back to school. There are a number of important things to consider as you get your children ready for the classroom.

- Sleep. Children aged five to 17 require anywhere from nine to 11 hours of sleep each day. Lack of sleep can lead to poor concentration, lowered problem-solving ability and can impact health and well-being.
- Vaccinations. Ensure your child's vaccinations are up to date. Routine vaccinations are provided in Grades 1, 5 and 9.
- Exercise. Children under the age of 18 need 60 minutes of physical activity every day. Find ways of getting the required 60 minutes by engaging your child in a brisk walk, playing at the park or participating in a sport.
- Limit screen time to no more than two hours per day. This includes TV and video games.
- Nutrition. Healthy snacks are important for good nutrition, providing energy and healthy growth. A healthy snack would include two or three food groups as per the Canada Food Guide.
- Dental work. Make sure your child has had his or her teeth checked by a dentist in the last year. Children should see the dentist annually.
- Eye check. Book a free eye exam before school starts. All children in Alberta qualify for free eye exams every year until their 18th birthday. Did you know that one of the top reasons students have difficulty in school is uncorrected vision problems?

What difference do you think these core values will bring to how patients and the workforce experience AHS?

Our values guide how we conduct ourselves and make decisions. It's about showing kindness, respecting diversity and treating people with dignity. It's about creating a work environment that is safe and supportive for patients and staff.

New Vision and Values Guide Health Care Future

AHS committed to five core values. Why are core values important to AHS?

Our core values are at the heart of what we stand for – AHS CARES: compassion, accountability, respect, excellence and safety. Our values inspire and empower us to work together with patients, clients, and families.

What difference do you think these core values will bring to how patients and the workforce experience AHS?

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Did you know you can help protect your child from many types of cancer?

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine helps protect boys and girls from cancers caused by HPV.

Make an informed decision. Try the interactive HPV Vaccine Decision Tool at albertapreventscancer.ca/HPV

There are plenty of health care options available. Learn yours by visiting the AHS website.
At one time, telehealth was only used to connect patients with specialists. But a forward-thinking nurse practitioner at the Slave Lake Family Care Clinic had an ‘aha!’ moment when she thought, “What if we used the videoconference technology to provide primary care in remote communities?”

A

my Yellowknee, a 29-year-old resident from Trout Lake, used to have to travel three hours to Slave Lake for routine appointments, but thanks to a new program spearheaded by a nurse practitioner at the Slave Lake Family Care Clinic, she can now receive the care she needs closer to home.

It’s all thanks to telehealth, a video-conferencing technology that allows Yellowknee to connect in real-time with her health care providers.

Yellowknee liked the idea as soon as she heard of it.

Yellowknee was happy to hear that she offered more access to our remote communities,” says Ross.

Ross adds that you can’t do everything via telehealth, but it’s a good alternative to have.

“It’s a great fit.”

The team has access to specialized assessment tools, like a digital stethoscope, to listen to someone’s heart or lungs. Ross works closely with the community support workers and nurses on the other end of the telehealth camera to help ensure the care is high quality and consistent.

“It’s all thanks to telehealth, a video-conferencing technology that allows Yellowknee to connect in real-time with her health care providers.”

For more information, call 780.849.4155.

“I’ve seen telehealth used a lot for specialty services but not for primary care – and I wanted to design a program where we could offer more access to our remote communities,” says Ross.

Ross adds that you can’t do everything via telehealth, but it’s a good alternative to have.

“I thought it was pretty cool to meet with Alison on telehealth. There were no challenges and I got everything I needed. I’d much rather do that than drive for hours, just to see someone for 10 or 20 minutes.”

Ross adds that you can’t do everything via telehealth, but it’s a good alternative to have.

“Sometimes telehealth is not appropriate, but sometimes it’s a great fit.”

The team has access to specialized assessment tools, like a digital stethoscope, to listen to someone’s heart or lungs. Ross works closely with the community support workers and nurses on the other end of the telehealth camera to help ensure the care is high quality and consistent.

“How simple it can be to use telehealth to connect with patients in remote communities.

A career in health care can be extremely rewarding. Visit the AHS website for career details.
A diagnosis of cancer can be devastating and the treatments that follow can take a toll on the body and mind. That journey is not easy, and it can be difficult to navigate. But for prostate cancer survivor Colin Cantlie, the key to getting through it all is attitude, education and participation.

“Attitude is so important in your recovery,” says Cantlie. “If your attitude is to shut down, then your physical and emotional health may follow.”

CancerControl Alberta (CCA) offers a way for patients to connect with other survivors and get practical tips and information about services available through a twice-yearly education event called Living Your Best Life with Cancer and Beyond (LYBL).

Run by the CCA Transitions of Care Provincial Project Team, the event is designed to support cancer survivors in living well with and beyond their diagnosis. LYBL sessions occur twice a year in Calgary and Edmonton and are open through video teleconference at all 17 cancer centres; it is the only outreach cancer education event in the north Zone, there are five community cancer centres: Barhead, Bonnyville, Hinton, Fort McMurray and Peace River, along with one regional cancer centre in Grande Prairie.

Cantlie was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2014. After opting for a radical prostatectomy – an operation that removes the prostate gland and some of the surrounding tissue – he is currently in recovery and determined to get the most out of his life, even if it is one with cancer.

“You must have an attitude that helps you move forward with enthusiasm to help you get better and stay better,” he says. Cantlie believes one of the best ways to cultivate a positive attitude is by having conversations, getting out there and being active. “It’s your body and your health. You may not like the diagnosis but you can change a lot by your attitude and your approach and by learning something new about your cancer every day.”

Amanda Jacques, Provincial Education Specialist – Survivorship, CCA, says each participating AHS cancer centre site creates a local live event with survivors, like Cantlie, who share their cancer story and answer questions. “We want to give patients and families the ability to take the next steps and really empower them to live their best life despite having cancer,” says Jacques.

The events focus on tips that participants can take right away to live their best life by:
• Adding movement or exercise into their day.
• Having a positive outlook.
• Learning how to minimize side effects.

Unlike many educational sessions and events, LYBL has been created for people with all types of cancer and stages of diagnosis, as well as cancer survivors. This uniqueness is what draws Cantlie in. “Although we do not all have the same form of cancer or the same outlook or prognosis, there is the common link between us that we are all survivors. To share our different stories allows us to support each other in a unique way.”

LYBL events began four years ago and have drawn over 2,000 participants across Alberta. The next LYBL event will be held Oct. 28 in Edmonton and will be offered provincewide through Telehealth, sites to be confirmed.

For more information, visit www.albertahealthservices.ca/cancer/Page9613.aspx.

LIVING YOUR BEST LIFE WITH CANCER AND BEYOND

Story and photo by Kristin Bernhard

Deb Allatt, AHS Lead, Provincial Patient Education, Patient Engagement and Supportive Care, left, joins patient Colin Cantlie and Amanda Jacques, Provincial Education Specialist – Survivorship, CancerControl Alberta, in the exercise facility at the Holy Cross Cancer Centre where Cantlie stays healthy following his cancer treatment.
Neither fear nor disability kept Frank Gibot from lending a hand in the wildfire’s aftermath.

INcredible HELP on ‘Awful Day’

Story by Erika Sherk | Photo courtesy Matthew Wattie

I t was the “most awful day” of his life. A wildfire was ripping through Fort McMurray and Frank Gibot had been evacuated from the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre (NLRHC).

He was away from his home – the continuing care unit at the NLRHC – and had endured a seven-hour bus ride to safety. During the trip, he’d felt the heat of the wildfire through the bus walls and wondered if he was going to make it.

The 64-year-old – a stroke survivor – was tired and scared. However, once he arrived at Sunnar’s Firebag site, Gibot spent no time feeling sorry for himself. Instead, he got to work.

“He called me over to his motorized wheelchair,” says Matthew Wattie, NLRHC Protective Services Manager. “He said, ‘I want to help, what can I do?’”

Wattie was hauling around several big yellow emergency response protocol binders.

“J’d just been carrying them under my arm as I did nine other things and hadn’t found a place to put them down,” he says. “I said, ‘Frank, these are very important documents, can you look after them for me?’”

Gibot said he could.

“He scooted himself over to a corner and set up in the wildfire site as a security guard,” says Wattie. “I think he deserves it,” she says.

Gibot had been evacuated from the northern Alberta Health Services site at Firebag.

When she heard about Gibot, Knuth decided to give him a T-shirt. “I think he deserves it,” she says.

She and other continuing care staff made a presentation to him.

“It was a great honour of receiving the special shirt,” says Gibot. “I felt good about it.”

Overall, he says that while it was awful, he doesn’t regret living through the evacuation.

“IT was pretty scary, but it was a good experience,” says Gibot.

Neither fear nor disability kept Frank Gibot from lending a hand in the wildfire’s aftermath.

Erika Sherk

Passion for Health blogs are an opportunity to introduce Albertans to the people behind Alberta Health Services who care deeply about providing the best possible care. The subjects range from personal stories of triumph, to healthy recipes, to active living.

For some of our latest blogs, visit www.albertahealthservices.ca/blogs/pfh.

Jennifer Knuth, a registered nurse at NLRHC, was moved when she heard Frank’s story. Gibot had decided soon after evacuating that he needed to thank the first responders who were in the city as the wildfire tore through it. To date she has raised $20,000 and handed out T-shirts to first responders who showed courage and kindness in the fire’s aftermath.

INsTRaGAM

Tracy, a registered nurse at Foothills Medical Centre, was asked “Who do you look up to?” She replied: “My mom, because she was so genuine and caring, and had a great heart.”

#wearsahs #thisishealthy #healthcare #people #inspire #caring #nurse.

FACEBOOK

There’s nothing quite like an act of kindness to help us focus on the good in the world.

Follow your zone at AHS_NorthZone: • Most headaches are tension headaches, and can last from 30 minutes to seven days. For information about causes and treatment, visit https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=rt1023&rt1024
• Motor vehicle injuries are the No. 1 cause of unintentional injury for teens in Alberta. Help your teen to be a #safedriver at https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/teen-drivers.aspx.
• Advance care planning helps you prepare for the future: http://bit.ly/1LzhUnZ.

For the latest health news updates in your zone, visit the AHS website. www.ahs.ca
troll down the toy aisle at your local department store and the prescribed gender stereotypes are clear: fighting or making other mayhem for the boys, donning tiaras and doing sparkly crafts for the girls. Many would say it has always been so. But some warn children are pushed toward more masculine and feminine gender “boxes” than ever – with potentially harmful results.

“It’s important to think about what messages we send our kids if we start forcing them into some of these roles that are at the extreme ends of the gender spectrum,” says Dr. Rebecca Sullivan, director of the Women’s Studies Program at the University of Calgary.

Sullivan says hyper-gendered toys give unhealthy messages that boys need to deny their sensitive, creative sides, and girls need to be passive and pretty. Not so long ago, Lego was Lego, Kinder Surprise was Kinder Surprise, and the toys in a Happy Meal were just toys. Now, girls have their own version of Lego in pinks and pastels, the chocolate eggs with the toys inside now have a pink version aimed at girls, and boys’ and girls’ toys are offered at the drive-through.

Gender stereotyping goes well beyond toys. Even summer camps set masculine and feminine standards at ever-further poles apart.

Way too many summer camps encourage boys to go skateboarding and mountain biking and girls to play princess and get mani-pedis, Sullivan says.

“On the one hand, we tell our boys that they need to participate in high-risk activities, while girls are told to stay inside or they might break a nail. There’s no chance for kids to try different things or for some of these activities to cross-pollinate when they’re so delineated.”

A healthier approach is to let kids stretch their wings in childhood. They will figure out their likes, dislikes and strengths by trial and error and trying all kinds of activities.

“We need to be mindful about what subtle or not-so-subtle messages we’re giving our kids when we use playtime to reinforce gender roles,” says Sullivan.

Accepting and encouraging kids’ interests in arts, music, science and math empowers them to discover their own unique strengths and abilities, regardless of gender. Shaming children about their choices can lead to low self-esteem, depression, addiction and even suicide.

It’s even more dangerous when shaming turns into bullying and homophobia.

Sullivan adds it’s all too easy to blame the media for its messages and toy makers for their products. The fact is parents, teachers, child-care professionals, health care providers and even religious advisers all influence gender attitudes.

Parents can also choose (or help their children choose) toys and pastimes that develop a range of skills, interests and learning goals that are part of being a well-rounded person.

Children are perfectly able to figure out their identities without adults pushing them into preconceived gender stereotypes.

Children thrive when they are accepted, supported and can be creative – and that includes with their gender identity. It’s healthy and creative to mix a little glitter in with the light-sabres, or have robots and dinosaurs attend the princess ball.
Fort McMurray may have experienced the cruellest spring in its history – but the community hasn’t been beaten. “People here are resilient and we’re rebuilding one day at a time,” says Susanne Chaffey, former executive director of the Northern Lights Health Foundation.

Although the fires were finally put out in June, people continue to come forward with donations in time as well as money. Recently, the Canadian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy donated $35,000 to purchase a bronchoscope – an instrument that enters the nose or mouth to allow physicians to visually check patients’ airways for abnormalities such as foreign bodies, bleeding, tumors or inflammation. As well, it can take specimens from inside the lungs.

Dallas Kuhr, manager of the ambulatory care and respiratory department at Northern Lights Regional Health Centre, says the instrument gives a great visual of lung tissue and its condition. “Bronchoscopes help us determine whether there is pulmonary irritation and swelling in the lungs,” she says. “This increases with smoke inhalation and, in turn, increases the risk of infection. We really see the importance of this instrument for our first responders who are affected firsthand.”

As news of the wildfire spread throughout Canada, so did support for Fort McMurray. Staff, physicians and volunteers at Markham Stouffville Hospital in Ontario hosted a bowling night that raised $150 for the foundation. Members of the bowling team agreed that: “even in the face of their own personal crisis, our colleagues in Fort McMurray continued providing exceptional patient care.”

Addis Chaffey: “We’ve been privileged to work with so many caring people and organizations over the years, so it’s really no surprise at the support we are seeing.”

Tim Horton’s and McDonald’s both hosted fundraisers during the evacuations, with McDonald’s raising $17,200. Tim’s set up mobile coffee shops for first responders throughout the city for several weeks, and also raised more than $500. For Amelia Schofield, marketing and communications officer at the Northern Lights Health Foundation, the fires profoundly affected her and her family. “The day of the evacuation was one of the scariest moments of my life,” says Schofield. “You not only fear for your own safety, but the safety of your family, friends, co-workers. It’s gut-wrenching.

“I was touched by the outpouring of generosity from across Alberta and Canada throughout this experience; it was remarkable and made getting through this much easier. I can’t thank everyone enough for their support of my family and our community during this difficult time.”

The foundation office reopened June 21. When Chaffey and her colleagues returned to work, the environment felt different. “The catastrophe has certainly changed things for us,” she says. “The normal is no longer normal – but our community is adjusting and I’m really proud to see such strength and remarkable spirit in people.”

For more information, or to make a donation, please visit www.northernlightshealthfoundation.ca.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**Sept 23**

**Roots and Ruts Trail Race**

The Regional EMS Foundation is hosting the Roots and Ruts Trail Race, with proceeds going toward Regional EMS Foundation scholarships for advanced EMS education. Takes place at the South Bear Creek Trails in Grande Prairie. Start time is 5:30 p.m.; five-km walk, five-km run or 10-km run. Hot meal and bonfire at finish. For more information, or to purchase tickets, go to www.walkrun.ca/events.html.

**Sept 17**

**17th Annual Golf Classic for Life**

The Regional EMS Foundation is hosting its 17th annual Golf Classic For Life, with proceeds going toward Regional EMS Foundation scholarships for advanced EMS education. Takes place at the Grande Prairie Golf and Country Club in Grande Prairie. Tickets are $200 and include 18 holes, a cart, breakfast, lunch and supper, live and silent auction. For more information, or to purchase tickets, go to www.remsfoundation.org/events/star_of_life_golf_classic.
This year for Stroke Month, the Alberta Health Services (AHS) staff who make up the Grande Prairie Stroke Early Supported Discharge (SESd) team came up with a plan to spread the word about exercise and its benefits. In June, they organized a different weekly exercise class that colleagues at the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital could take part in over their lunch hour.

“One of the main ways to help prevent stroke is through active movement,” says Jaime Woods, clinical co-ordinator for the SESd team. “T’ai chi is a good choice because it's very low impact, but at the same time, research has proven that t’ai chi can improve cardiovascular health,” Posas says. “It’s a good way to exercise without lots of the cardiovascular risks for people who’ve had a stroke, hypertension or arthritis.”

Posas says maintaining interest is key to staying in an exercise program. “People who come to our rehab program do lots of exercises, but when the program is done, they go back to the couch. They don’t know what’s out there and if we offer this class and they try it and like it, they’re more likely to seek it out and be involved in the long term.”

“How do we get them interested? As soon as they come in we give them a choice,” says Posas. “We talk about the class and if they’re interested we call them back another time and they take it.”