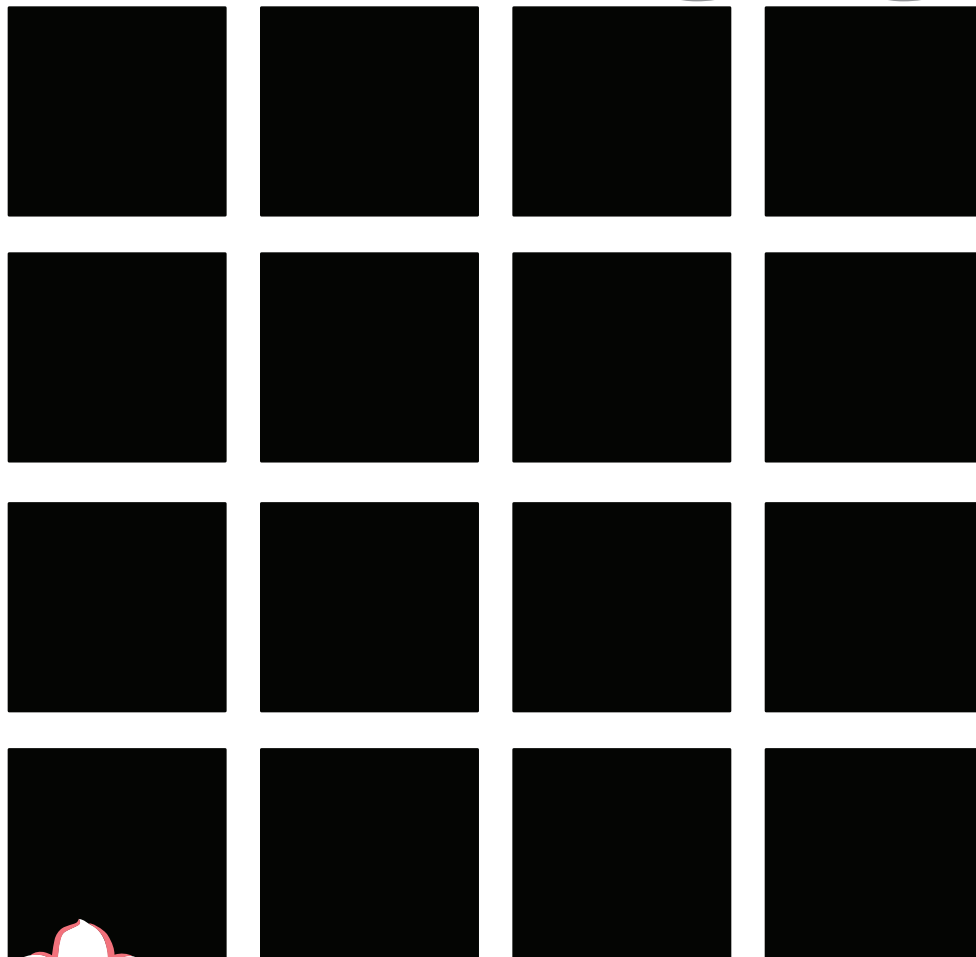


we're here.



Fall 2006

Approximately 28,000 Nova Scotians are living with cancer. 5,300 more will be diagnosed this year – about 14 people each day.

we're here

Take another look at the front cover of this document. Within the system of blocks, most people can see grey dots connecting the squares. While they are of a different form than the physical structures around them, their function is to hold the picture together. The solid blocks represent the elements of Nova Scotia's cancer system and the grey connectors represent *Cancer Care Nova Scotia (CCNS)*.

There is a complex array of cancer services in Nova Scotia that involves dozens of programs and organizations; hundreds of volunteers, staff and specialists; thousands of patients and families; and millions of dollars.

CCNS pulls all of these elements together into a coordinated, comprehensive, rational and world-class system of cancer care.

Since 1998, we've proven the success of the CCNS approach. Our impact? Reduced cancer rates, more specialists, better access to quality care, world-class research, historic legislation and a network of professional and volunteer champions throughout Nova Scotia.

Without occasionally stepping back to look at the full picture, you may not be aware of how close *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* really is to you. Wherever you find yourself in the fight against cancer – you can be confident, we're here.



Odds are, there is one thing that you share with everyone else who reads this report – you will be touched by cancer. Either you, or someone you love, will at some point need some part of Nova Scotia’s cancer system.

When *Cancer Care Nova Scotia (CCNS)* was launched in 1998, it was a brave and innovative approach to connecting programs, providers and policy makers into a system of cancer care. Almost a decade later, we are an established model that is regarded around the world as the standard by which cancer programs should be planned, organized and delivered.

While we celebrate our remarkable successes – ones we share with all our partners dedicated to the common goal of beating cancer – we know we cannot rest on those accomplishments. For as long as relationships must be sustained, standards developed, knowledge shared and people need local access to cancer support, we have work to do.

As individuals, hopefully we are all better at taking charge of our own health through regular check ups, routine cancer screening and a healthy lifestyle that reduces the likelihood of cancer developing. Teams of health service providers are on the front line on the war against this disease – and that’s where your relationship with *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* begins.

Thank you for your continued support,



Jack Keith
Board Chair



Andrew Padmos, BA, MD, FRCPC
Commissioner (1998 – 2006)

we're here
for you

we're here for cancer patients

In spite of the considerable progress that has been made in the fight against cancer, a diagnosis is still one of the most frightening things a patient and family can hear. From the moment that cancer touches the life of a Nova Scotian, a province-wide network of support kicks into gear.

Receiving care as close to home as possible is vitally important and we have helped to establish a system of locally-based services ranging from volunteer support and education through to outreach clinics provided by specialists.

care closer to home

While receiving care close to home is important, patient and families equally want to be assured that the care they get is the very best. CCNS ensures quality by developing and sharing standards that guide the planning and delivery of all cancer programs. You can be confident that every facility providing a cancer service in the province meets our standards of care.

confidence in quality

We work with health professionals throughout the province to keep everyone up-to-date with the most current information about cancer management including screening and prevention protocols, treatment options, drug developments and symptom control.

Responding to a diagnosis of cancer can feel like you have been swallowed into a maze of programs and providers, and even a new language describing your disease and treatment options. CCNS identified early on the need for a patient navigation function – specially trained health team members who provide guidance through the corridors of the cancer system.

and their families.

Cancer Patient Navigators work with family physicians, community-based specialists, oncologists and other cancer health professionals to coordinate services. They provide an added source of cancer expertise for health professionals in the community and promote teamwork and communication among health care providers. They help to ensure that patients have access to supportive and rehabilitative care, palliative care volunteers and other services in their home communities. Patient Navigators pay special attention to facilitating culturally competent care.

Since Cancer Patient Navigation was introduced (piloted in three health districts in February 2002 and then expanded to two more in September 2003), there have been 4,700 referrals from 3,200 cancer patients. As a result of these referrals, Cancer Patient Navigators have provided advice, guidance, education and support to all of these patients and/or family members. On average, 20 newly diagnosed cancer patients are referred to each Cancer Patient Navigator every month. An additional 12-to-15 cancer patients are being re-referred to each Cancer Patient Navigator every month because of a change in their health.

We also understand that sometimes the greatest source of support is from someone who has lived through the experience themselves. That's why the Cancer Patient Family Network is so important, as a means to connect people with cancer so that they can exchange information and identify ways that the cancer system can be improved. The establishment of the Sunshine Room at the QEII in Capital Health – where people undergoing cancer treatments can receive massage therapy, therapeutic touch and reflexology from trained volunteers – is an example of how patient feedback has made things better.

navigating the system

support &
survivorship

we're here
for you

we're here for community-based

Community-based health care providers need our support to ensure they are doing the best job they can for their cancer patients. They have told us that they need help to stay on top of evidence about the most current and effective treatments, pain and symptom control, management of side effects and palliative care – as well as best practices relating to prevention and screening protocols.

continuing education

No matter where you live in Nova Scotia, you can be assured of access to the highest standard of cancer services because of the work and commitment of all our partners in defining roles in all four “Levels of Care”: Basic, Intermediate, Advanced and Subspecialized. For each level, minimum standards for space, equipment, professional numbers and qualifications are defined.

*support to the
health care team*

CCNS also helps to close the gap in connecting health care providers with information about the resources that are available and how to access them for patient care. This includes providing professionals with referral information so that they too are able to navigate the system.

A big part of caring for patients is equipping them with knowledge about their disease and the confidence to apply it. CCNS has developed a comprehensive menu of patient education resource materials which speak to nearly every dimension of the cancer experience. These resources help patients and families take charge of their care plan and support everyone in their decision-making about the best alternatives for care and support.

health care providers.

To address the specific oncology education needs of health professionals, CCNS brought together the Nova Scotia Registered Nurses Professional Development Centre, Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine and College of Pharmacy to design an interprofessional core curriculum training program called "Excellence in Cancer Care". The program includes professional training on ten topic areas:

- gastrointestinal symptoms
- cancer symptoms and metabolic imbalances
- chemotherapy and side effects
- radiation therapy and side effects
- oncologic emergencies
- pain management: the basics
- pain management: building on the basics
- managing psycho-social responses
- creating therapeutic conversations
- childhood cancer: early recognition and late effects

More than 500 health professionals across Nova Scotia attended the sessions including nurses, pharmacists and physicians.

CCNS also developed the Palliative Care Front Line Education Program and has partnered with Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) to make it available to health professionals across the province. As well, NSCC has added the program to its regular curriculum for continuing care and practical nursing students. So far, nearly 1,500 health professionals and palliative care volunteers have taken part in the training.

*patient education
resources*

*best practice
and protocols*

we're here
for you

we're here for specialists in

Nova Scotians want to know that they have access to the best cancer specialists available and CCNS's recruitment strategy has achieved that – defying a severe shortage of medical oncologists across Canada. The best of the best were convinced to come here because of Nova Scotia's reputation for a well-coordinated system of cancer care and strong and supportive partnerships across government, the professional networks, our education and research community, and advocacy groups.

recruiting the best

Our success has been dramatic.

In 1998, before CCNS, there were only three medical oncologists remaining in the province. Today there are twelve. In fact, since we've been on the scene, CCNS has helped to attract many specialists working in the three regional cancer centres (Nova Scotia Cancer Centre in Halifax, Cape Breton Cancer Centre in Sydney and IWK Health Centre in Halifax).

securing resources

A full complement of cancer specialists at cancer sites means reduced wait times, improved access to services, better care and enhanced capacity to do outreach.

Cancer Specialists in Nova Scotia (July 2006)

Medical Oncologists	12	Ocular Oncologists	2
Radiation Oncologists	12	Palliative Care	12
Hematologists	9	*Urologists	2
*Dermatology	3	Cancer Surgeons	14
Gynecologic Oncologists	4	**Pediatric Cancer Specialists	8

* with an oncology focus

**Pediatric cancer specialists in Nova Scotia include two hematologists, four medical oncologists, one surgical oncologist and one palliative care physician.

cancer treatment.

Attracting and keeping these specialists is obviously central to Nova Scotia's cancer strategy, but it takes a team of dedicated health professionals in a number of disciplines to provide cancer patients and families with the service and support they need. These include, but are not limited to, nurses, pharmacists, epidemiologists, psychologists, family doctors, physiotherapists, social workers and researchers.

Nova Scotia has put its money where its mouth is. We have seen investments to upgrade facilities, train staff, build teams, enhance treatment options and support the development of new cancer management techniques. Creating this environment was central to CCNS's strategy to attracting specialists here – and government listened.

Specialists are most effective when they are provided with the tools of their trade, which include access to drugs, equipment, support staff and the facilities to work in. CCNS works with district health authorities to develop strategies to ensure that resources are invested where they will have the greatest impact. We help them with the review of proposed capital projects, major equipment purchases and health human resource plans that will address both immediate and long-term needs.

As new information about cancer prevention and treatment emerges, we have to be ready to apply that knowledge to continuous quality improvement. This keeps us ahead of the curve in anticipating the changing environment for clinical care and ensures that our specialists maintain their place as leaders and innovators within their international community of colleagues.

supporting
Health Districts

staying ahead
of the curve

we're here
for you

we're here

for researchers and

Nova Scotia is rich in its research partnerships. With a platform that includes Dalhousie University, the Nova Scotia Health Research Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society - Nova Scotia Division, and institutes such as GPI Atlantic, we are leading the way in finding answers to a range of cancer-related issues including prevention, treatment, palliation and the social and economic consequences of the disease.

securing investments

There are many different kinds of cancer research looking for answers about how to cure, manage, detect and prevent the disease. Our experts involved in basic cancer research, applied cancer research, cancer systems and outcomes and population cancer research are part of provincial, national and international networks of investigators with a common goal – to beat cancer.

strength to our team

CCNS has helped to establish Nova Scotia as a national powerhouse in cancer research – benefiting not only cancer patients and their families, but the provincial economy as well. We are also assembling the largest teams of endowed chairs dedicated to cancer research in Canada.

We have partnered with the Canadian Institute of Health Research and its Institute of Cancer Research to support cancer research trainee development. We're also investing in the next generation of investigators through

scientists.

the Norah Stephen Oncology Awards, having given a \$5,000 award to more than 55 Nova Scotia health professions students since 2002. Many of them have chosen to continue their studies in cancer or cancer research as the result of receiving the oncology award. These investments are already helping to sustain our momentum with the next generation of world-class cancer researchers.

In May 2004, *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* introduced the Peggy Davison Cancer Research Scientist Award. Named in honour of Peggy Davison, Inaugural Board Chair for CCNS, the award provides \$100,000 in each of six consecutive years to build cancer knowledge in the area of health services and outcomes research.

The first recipient of the award was Dr. Eva Grunfeld, now the Director, Cancer Outcomes Research (COR) Program for CCNS. Dr. Grunfeld is a clinician and health services researcher who holds several peer-reviewed grants and has conducted research on the continuum of cancer care, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. With funding from the Peggy Davison Award, Dr. Grunfeld has been building an expert team in health services research. She is interested in the entire spectrum of cancer control and continues to examine issues of cancer survivorship as well as end-of-life care.

achieving excellence

expanding our
infrastructure

we're here
for you

we're here for people who make

*linking evidence
to action*

*informing rational
investments*

When there are limited resources to invest in tackling a problem, you want to know that money will get a bang for its buck. Government is bombarded with demands for funding – even within the cancer system. New drugs (some costing \$60,000 per patient per year) are emerging faster than health insurance plans can anticipate. It is vital that we understand what really works and what the benefits and side effects really are before committing money to new therapies – an enormously difficult process that is charged with the emotion of desperately hoping for the cure.

Rational decision-making based on good evidence is what policy makers have come to expect and rely on from us. CCNS is the primary advisor to the Minister and Department of Health on cancer control, prevention, early detection, surveillance, treatment, supportive care, rehabilitation, palliative care and survivorship. We are trusted to provide expert direction on what is one of the most significant health issues facing virtually every Nova Scotia family.

We are able to give credible advice because of our close connection with every aspect of the cancer care system in every community across Nova Scotia. We also are in touch with cancer care developments nationally and around the world, and bring that knowledge to local decision-making. Developing policy for the management of cancer is one side of the coin. Supporting policy for healthy communities and lifestyles so that cancer can be prevented is the other.

policy decisions.

We know that many cancers are associated with unhealthy lifestyles. As such, CCNS is a strong advocate for supports throughout society for individuals and families to be able to make healthy choices in their lives.

CCNS is working with our partners to draw attention to the risk factors of developing cancer, which include smoking, being overweight, not having enough physical activity and unprotected exposure to the sun. To take action on these issues, we work with a broad range of organizations to promote and achieve healthy public policy.

On the tobacco issue, Nova Scotia has made great strides in addressing this aspect of a comprehensive cancer strategy. This legislation was the result of a remarkably effective coalition of interests, ranging from grassroots organizations and municipalities to charities and advocacy groups, volunteer organizations and professional associations.

CCNS is also collaborating on such initiatives as Healthy Eating and Physical Activity, Sun Safe Nova Scotia and in the movement to support healthy schools.

With a view to arming policy makers with the evidence they need to make rational decisions, we have also funded research into the social costs of obesity and smoking. CCNS is on the front line with its partners to educate the public and politicians alike about the importance of these issues, paving the way for policy makers to be able to do the right thing.

promoting healthy
public policy

monitoring and surveillance

we're here
for you

we're here

for health system

Many people say that it isn't just what CCNS does that is important – it's how we do it. We don't provide direct patient care, but we are behind every cancer program that does. That means working closely with the district health authorities in helping them design and implement their own strategies to provide care to patients. We work with districts to create tailored solutions to their specific needs.

coordinating care

With nine health districts in the province, which all deal with high rates of cancer, having a clearinghouse of expertise in best practices, program development and evaluation means that no one is wasting resources. It also means that administrators can most effectively customize programs to meet the particular needs of their district and the diverse communities they serve. It is through these collaborative relationships that the right solutions are found and brought home.

organizing outreach

CCNS also provides data to every district health authority on the number of people in their district diagnosed and living with cancer, and the use of services in responding to the disease. New data reported in 2005 included chemotherapy drug costs and updated Cancer Centre statistics, by county, for chemotherapy and radiation treatment. This information is of tremendous value to the districts in their own planning and management. We also produce data to support the Department of Health's wait time initiative.

administrators.

Nova Scotia is fondly referred to as a province of small towns and for as many cases of cancer that we have, there is sometimes not enough critical mass to support a specialist program or stand-alone service. CCNS helps to coordinate satellite clinics that link specialists in larger areas with health service providers in smaller ones – bringing care closer to patients and their families.

It is apparent that our approach is working. Recent patient satisfaction surveys show that 78 per cent of responses from the Cape Breton Cancer Centre in Sydney and 71 per cent of patients from the Nova Scotia Cancer Centre in Halifax reported their experience as being good-to-excellent. These percentages exceed the Canadian average of 68.5 per cent.

Nova Scotia cancer patients rated their experience higher than the Canadian average in all categories including: access to care, information, communication and education, respect for patient preferences, emotional support, physical comfort and coordination and continuity of care.

The ultimate test of the effectiveness of a cancer program is the feedback we receive from patients and families. The health system administrators with whom we work can be proud of the leadership they have shown in the programs they designed and oversee.

developing programs

*building a
province-wide system*

we're here
for you

we're here

for every person in

We are proud of Nova Scotia's achievements in cancer care since CCNS entered the scene. We are also realistic about the enormous challenges that lie ahead. Gains that we have made in reducing rates of some cancers, increasing the number of people in screening programs and recruitment of specialists can be easily offset by an aging population, new risks for the development of disease and the exploding costs of treatment.

That's why it's important that we never let up on the momentum that has been created, that we never take for granted the relationships that have been forged and that we never relax our commitment to excellence and quality in all we do.

Winning the war against cancer requires action on several fronts, by a coordinated army of champions. These may be specialists or community-based health care providers, policy makers or politicians, grassroots organizations or national research institutes ... people who are living with cancer and those who enjoy good health. Ultimately, everyone needs to be part of the strategy.

Nova Scotia.

We're here to ensure that Nova Scotia has healthy public policies, to protect everyone against the risks of cancer.

We're here to ensure that Nova Scotia has the best cancer experts available for you and your family when treatment is needed.

We're here to ensure that the highest quality of care is provided in every setting through standards, clinical practice guidelines and professional training.

We're here to ensure that public money is invested with the greatest impact so that every penny we spend is in the right place.

We're here to guide a research agenda that puts Nova Scotia ahead of the curve so we're not just fighting the disease, we're winning.

We're here to help everyone anticipate the future – patients, providers, researchers and policy-makers and tax payers all rely on CCNS to be proactive in having the plans and programs in place to meet their needs.

we're here
for you

we're **here**
for you

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www.cancercare.ns.ca