

## Implementing a National Cancer Strategy



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**T**wo Canadians are diagnosed with cancer every seven minutes and one-in-three of us will develop cancer in our lifetime. A sobering statistic, yes. But, the formation of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (the Partnership) will make a positive impact through implementation of the Canadian Strategy to Control Cancer.

Announced by Prime Minister Stephen Harper in November 2006, the Partnership unites patient survivors, cancer experts and government representatives from across the country to lead the implementation of a national cancer strategy. The expected result: a reduction in the number of new cases of cancer among Canadians; enhanced quality of life for those living with cancer; and, a decrease in the likelihood of Canadians dying from cancer.

"It is an exciting and timely initiative," said

Theresa Marie Underhill, Chief Operating Officer, *Cancer Care Nova Scotia*, and one of the key players in the development of the Canadian Strategy. Other countries such as France, Australia and the UK have implemented national cancer control strategies with striking results. France, for example, has experienced a 20 per cent reduction in cancer deaths. We need those kinds of results in Canada. The Partnership gives the Canadian Strategy the wind it needs to go the distance."

Led by Board Chair, Jeff Lozon and CEO Jessica Hill, the Partnership will ensure the most reliable and current cancer knowledge on prevention, screening, diagnosing, treatment and research reaches government officials, cancer professionals, support groups, patients and families, and individuals in every part of Canada. In short, the Partnership is excellent news. *(continued on next page)*



L-R: Mr. Jeff Lozon,  
Board Chair,  
Canadian Partnership  
against Cancer;  
Ms. Theresa Marie Underhill,  
Chief Operating Officer,  
Cancer Care Nova Scotia;  
Mr. Jack Keith,  
Board Chair (2001-2007),  
Cancer Care Nova Scotia.

*Implementing a National Cancer Strategy (cont'd from front page)*

Work on cancer control has been occurring on many fronts across the country. The difference the Partnership brings is the national focus and mechanisms for efficiently and effectively sharing best practices and research.

For example, the innovative model of Cancer Patient Navigation, developed in Nova Scotia, will be shared through the partnership across the country. The partnership will also support further evaluation of the cost / benefit of Cancer Patient Navigation. This is something every cancer program in the country needs to know.

Nova Scotia is represented in other ways as well. René Gallant, past national president of the Canadian Cancer Society, is on the Partnership's Board of

Directors and CCNS' Director of Cancer Outcomes Research, Dr. Eva Grunfield – a clinician scientist with the Department of Medicine at Capital Health – is on the Partnership's Advisory Council.

“The Partnership is about sharing and adopting the best of the best from across the country,” said Ms. Underhill. “In Nova Scotia, we're committed to sharing our expertise and we look forward to learning from others and applying that knowledge.”

We will keep you posted on the Partnership's projects and progress.

For more information on the Canadian Partnership against Cancer, visit their website at [www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca](http://www.partnershipagainstcancer.ca)

## Cancer Answers Lecture Series – A Success

Questions associated with cancer are seemingly endless and whether you are a patient, a survivor, a family member or health care provider, one thing everyone affected by cancer shares is the need for answers.

For this reason, *Cancer Care Nova Scotia's* Cancer Patient Family Network recently launched Cancer Answers, a series of free public lectures, on a variety of cancer-related topics. The lectures, delivered by cancer experts, are designed to raise awareness and educate participants about issues related to prevention, screening, early diagnosis, treatment, survivorship and palliative care.

“We're partnering with the health districts and the Canadian Cancer Society to help build awareness about a variety of cancer issues in local communities,” said Emmie Luther-Hiltz, Coordinator of the Cancer Patient Family Network. “The lectures provide a reason for people to come together and learn about specific topics while at the same time, meeting others from their community, who may have been affected by cancer, and discovering local resources.”

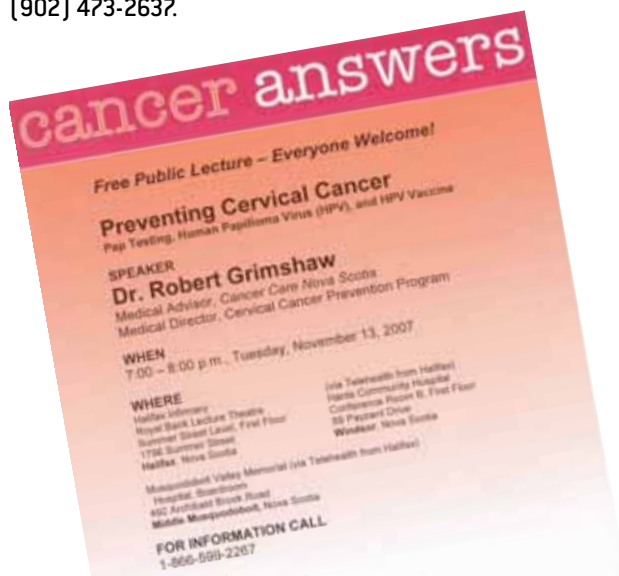
With four sessions per year – October, November, April and May – the one-hour evening lectures are video-conferenced across the province. In addition, the lectures are taped for airing on cable television. DVD copies are also available at all regional libraries and



District Health Authorities. To date, six lectures have been held on topics including skin cancer, colorectal cancer, nutrition and cancer, cancer support and survivorship.

“So far it's been very successful,” said Emmie. “We've had over 800 people participate and the majority find the information and discussions very helpful; the lectures are truly making a difference in communities.”

Upcoming lectures are scheduled for November 13, 2007, April 8, 2008 and May 20, 2008. For a list of topics and more information, please visit the CCNS website at [www.cancercare.ns.ca](http://www.cancercare.ns.ca) or contact Emmie Luther-Hiltz at [emmie.luther-hiltz@ccns.nshealth.ca](mailto:emmie.luther-hiltz@ccns.nshealth.ca) or (902) 473-2637.





## Leadership – Nova Scotia Style

Is being a leader the same as being a role model? Well, if you consider the career of Joanne Cumminger, a registered nurse and one of Nova Scotia's first Cancer Patient Navigators, you'll see that the two are often married. That's because, even though Joanne finds practicing in one of *Cancer Care Nova Scotia's (CCNS)* groundbreaking programs rewarding, the 'leader' inside her knows that it takes a team to experience true success.

"Leadership in the cancer world is about getting everyone who is involved in the care of cancer patients to work together towards a common goal," explained Joanne. "It's about being creative with existing resources, teaching and coaching patients to take an active role in their health care, which in turn helps them make informed decisions and become more independent."

As Cancer Patient Navigator for Pictou County Health Authority, Joanne works with cancer patients and families as well as health professionals to address system gaps. She is a full member of the cancer team and as such provides input into standards of care and clinical guidelines; addresses patient concerns; educates patients and families about their cancer and what to expect from treatment to help prepare them for their appointments with cancer specialists; and provides information about supportive care services available in the community.

Before assuming the role of Cancer Patient Navigator in 2001, Joanne worked as an oncology nurse for many years and witnessed gaps in the system first hand. "Patients were going to oncology appointments unprepared, without the financial means for travel and lodging, and no medical plans or community support," she said. "Today, Cancer Patient Navigators are using innovative ways to

meet the challenges of the growing incidence of cancer and to ease the journey of Nova Scotians who are living with it. In discussion with colleagues across Canada, I get the impression that Nova Scotia is the envy of other provinces."

Not surprising, Cancer Patient Navigator is just one of many leadership positions Joanne holds. She is a member of the Department of Health's Provincial Systemic Therapy Policy Committee; an Advisor to three local cancer support groups; Co-chair of Pictou County Health Authority's District Cancer Committee; district coordinator for *CCNS'* Interprofessional Core Curriculum; the Education Co-Chair of the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology (CANO); a reviewer of cancer treatment guidelines; and, the Coordinator of her district's satellite oncology service. Her awards and achievements are also plenty, including: Canadian Nurse of the Year and the recipient of a Princess Diana Humanitarian Award, a YMCA Peace Medallion and a Queen's Jubilee Medal. Most recently, Joanne was presented with a Practice Award of Excellence by the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology and Pfizer Oncology.

"My role as a nurse, from pediatrics to management, oncology clinic nurse to navigator, has always played an important role in my life and community, and I am honoured to receive this award," said Joanne. "There are many oncology nurses that qualify and I accept it on their behalf as I know we are all making a difference in cancer patients' lives."

*Ms. Joanne Cumminger,  
Cancer Patient Navigator,  
Pictou County Health Authority*





Volume VIII, Issue Five /  
November 2007

This is a newsletter for and about the people and issues affected by Nova Scotia's cancer care system. It is produced by *Cancer Care Nova Scotia*.

We welcome and encourage everyone's input to this newsletter. Please submit your stories or story ideas to: *Cancer Care Nova Scotia Newsletter*  
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The deadline for articles and story ideas for Volume VIII, Issue Six is December 5, 2007.

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## Preventing Colorectal Cancer – Laying the Foundation

In September, *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* announced the team leading the planning for the implementation of the provincial Colorectal Cancer Prevention Program. This came not a moment too soon as almost 800 Nova Scotians are diagnosed with colorectal cancer each year. As well, Nova Scotia ranks among the highest in the country in the incidence of colorectal cancer, a disease which is largely preventable.

"As with any new program, it is important to keep people informed about the progress and decisions being made, as well as sharing how those decisions are being made," said Erika Nicholson, Program Manager, Colorectal Cancer Prevention Program. "We have a tight timeline and a number of key decisions to make by December 2007 when our proposed implementation plan is due at the Department of Health."

The decisions include: choosing the right screening test, developing clinical standards and developing the infrastructure for data collection and analysis.

"These are the building blocks for a quality, gold-standard screening program," said Dr. Bernie Badley, Medical Director, Colorectal Cancer Prevention Program. "We are bringing together expertise from medicine, public health, education, policy development, administration, information technology, communications, research, and evaluation to ensure we make the right decisions to support implementation of a high quality program that Nova Scotians will participate in."

The first priority is determining the appropriate screening test. Factors for consideration include ease


of use for people (easy to follow directions, few dietary restrictions), our goal to minimize the number of people who have a false positive test, and ease of distribution, both in getting the test into the hands of the public and in getting the completed test to the lab.

Developing clinical standards is also high on the agenda. This includes: establishing acceptable wait times between having a screening test and receiving the test results, as well as the acceptable standard for any follow-up testing; and developing an infrastructure for data collection and analysis to determine participation rates and to plan clinical and financial resource needs. Standards will also be developed for clinical service providers to ensure they have the right tools, education and information to continue providing their patients with high quality care.

"Ensuring high quality, evidence-based cancer prevention, treatment and care for all Nova Scotians is at the heart of all *Cancer Care Nova Scotia* programs," said Ms. Nicholson. "By engaging the 'right' people in building a strong foundation, we hope to reach out to Nova Scotians and encourage them to take action and view colorectal cancer screening as part of their healthy lifestyle."

Watch for further details regarding the development of *Cancer Care Nova Scotia's* Colorectal Cancer Prevention Program.

## News and Notes

 The Rebalance Focus Action Group of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer is planning a series of one-day workshops on Cancer Patient Navigation. These workshops are intended for those interested in understanding more about navigation and in implementing a program within their own jurisdiction. The workshops will deliver a planning framework for development of a patient navigation program, how to identify the focus of your navigation

model and what information you need to collect to evaluate and continuously improve navigation services. The workshops will take place in the following three cities:

Winnipeg, Manitoba – December 7, 2007;  
Fredericton, New Brunswick – January 18, 2008 and  
Edmonton, Alberta – February 12, 2008.

For further information and registration for any site please go to [www.cancerpatientnavigation.ca](http://www.cancerpatientnavigation.ca)