

**Inside this edition:**

- 1. Interview with Andrea Con, Ph.D.**
- 2. Suzanne Slocum, Ph.D. gives an update on her research**
- 3. Congratulations**
- 4. Priorities for Year Five**

# NETworks

**Interview with Andrea Con, Ph.D.**



**A**ndrea has training in behavioural medicine and health psychology with a specialization in counselling psychology. In addition to being a CIHR NET Investigator, she is also a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Care

and Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia. The following is an excerpt from a recent conversation about her relationship with the CIHR Cross Cultural Palliative NET:

**PW:** *Could you briefly summarize your work and education history prior to coming to the NET?*

**AC:** When I completed my BA I knew I wanted a life in psychology and research (Behavioural Medicine) but I also wanted to see how my work made a difference in the real world (not just the controlled environment with healthy university students). Therefore, throughout my graduate school education, which took me from Simon Fraser University (MA), to the University of Calgary (PhD) and eventually to Brown University (Post-Doc) in Providence, Rhode Island, I was fortunate to work in a number of medical settings (e.g., the Health Heart Program at St. Paul's Hospital, UBC School of Nursing, Foothills Medical Centre, Miriam Hospital) where I could apply research questions and see what impact they could make.

**PW:** *As a New Investigator for the NET, where do you see yourself making the biggest contribution to cross-cultural palliative care research?*

**AC:** My hope is to shed new light into the needs of

different cultures at the end of life and to help establish evidence-based/translational research that will help meet those needs.

**PW:** *You've recently completed some research in advanced care planning (ACP). Could you explain ACP for our readers?*

**AC:** Advance care planning is a process in which an individual creates instructions and guidelines about their medical care in the event that they are too seriously ill or injured to make decisions or communicate their wishes. Often an individual is named to be a substitute decision-maker during this time. It is the hope that people have this conversation with their family and/or health care providers. This can lead to a document known as an advance directive which can be useful for patients, their family, and health care providers should it be needed.

**PW:** *What do you think is the biggest take home message for decision makers from your ACP report?*

**AC:** To recognize the benefits of ACP and to be proactive in allowing every person the opportunity to reflect and discuss their end-of-life preferences.

For more information related to her cross cultural, palliative care and advanced care planning research, Andrea can be reached at: [ACon@bccancer.bc.ca](mailto:ACon@bccancer.bc.ca)

**Request for updates**

To help keep our partners informed of our progress, please continue to provide updates of your CIHR Cross Cultural Palliative NET research.



**Did you know?**

While the movement towards formal 'hospice palliative care' spaces at health care institutions is generally regarded to have started in the late 1960's, hospices have been found to exist as far back as 1100 years ago in Europe and the Middle East.

## CAM within CIHR's Cross-Cultural Palliative NET

One of the major research streams within the CIHR Cross-Cultural Palliative NET is the investigation of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) in cancer care. The Office of CAM within the US National Cancer Institute (NCI) has recently posited that CAM therapies are promising in managing quality-of-life and adverse treatment-related effects and calls for more research in this area.

Currently, Drs. Arminee Kazanjian and Suzanne Slocum are undertaking pilot studies within this research stream. Dr. Kazanjian received funding from the NET in order to investigate the literature on the prevalence of CAM within palliative and end-of-life care. We know that ethnically diverse populations will resort to CAM as an alternative to, or to augment, Western medicine. We also know that ethnically diverse populations tend to underutilize mainstream palliative care services. However, we do not understand the types of alternative practitioners and services

that are being sought out, at what point within the trajectory and under what circumstances they are resorted to. Along with support from Harvey Bosma and Lars Aplan, both Kazanjian and Slocum are conducting a systematic review utilizing Cochrane standards in order to answer these questions.

In addition to this research, Dr. Slocum received funding from the NET to investigate the feasibility of implementing a yoga therapy intervention. Yoga is regarded as an effective CAM therapy across multiple cultures. A growing body of randomized controlled research on yoga implies that yoga has physical and psychosocial benefits for the chronically ill. In recent years, scientists and clinicians have been examining the effects of yoga among cancer patients and survivors. Dr. Slocum's proposed study aims to examine the feasibility of implementing a yoga therapy intervention for breast cancer patients and survivors [post conventional treatment] within

BCCA's health and referral services, with the goal of capturing preliminary feasibility data to inform a future pilot study. The proposed study will identify the personal, social, and structural (i.e., health care system) factors that promote and impede acceptability, sustainability, recruitment and attrition of a yoga therapy program within BCCA, including the identification of cross-cultural factors. Both of these studies aim to disseminate findings by July of 2008.

### Congratulations to Kirsten-Bell, Ph.D.

Kirsten has been recently awarded a CIHR Knowledge Synthesis Grant. Among other things, her research will explore the cultural issues connected with delivering supportive and palliative care for Cancer survivors.

Way to go Kirsten and best of luck with your research!

### Find us on the web:

<http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/RES/ResearchPrograms/NET/default.htm>

### Priorities for Year Five: Building on our Success...

As we approach our fifth and final year of the CIHR Cross Cultural Palliative NET, we continue to reflect upon and report our research goals and intended outcomes.

To help ensure accountability to our funder—the CIHR—it's important that research proposals reflect specific outcomes or products (deliverables) you foresee coming out of your research (e.g. manuscript for publication, report, conference proceedings etc). These are in addition to mentioning listing your research objectives.

Listing deliverables is a win-win. Not only does this practice help us inform our partners about the progress of the grant and assist you with disseminating your results, it also work to bridge the knowledge-to-practice gap between researchers and decision makers.

**To submit an article, posting, let us know about an upcoming event, or for more information, please contact:**

#### Paul K. Weaver

Research Coordinator, CIHR Cross Cultural Palliative NET  
BCCA Cancer Rehab,  
Sociobehavioural Research Center  
600-750 West Broadway  
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1H5  
P: 604-877-6000, Loc 3275  
F: 604-708-2091  
E: [pweaver@bccancer.bc.ca](mailto:pweaver@bccancer.bc.ca)



*"Palliative Care in a Cross-Cultural Context: A New and Emerging Team (NET) for equitable and quality cancer care for culturally diverse populations" a CIHR funded five year grant. NET researchers are from the University of BC in Vancouver, the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia, Cancer Care Nova Scotia, and the BC Cancer Agency.*