

Northern Cancer Control Strategy: NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Increased focus on local specialized care

Key radiation therapy positions in place for the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North

Several new radiation therapy (RT) personnel have been recruited for the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North. The new hires are key medical and leadership staff who joined the new centre's team in July and August.

"One of the original concerns related to our new Cancer Centre was the ability to attract the necessary professionals. That's why a key focus of the Northern Cancer Control Strategy has been to recruit dedicated specialists for the North who will help deliver a new era in cancer care to our region," said Prince George - Valemount MLA Shirley Bond. "It is great news that these new radiation therapy professionals will provide Northern cancer patients and their families with the specialized care they need closer to home and shows that our strategy is working."

"A year after construction started on the Centre for the North, we can see both the building and its team of health professionals definitively taking shape," said Prince George - Mackenzie MLA Pat Bell. "We look forward to welcoming even more staff to the new centre over the coming year."

The new team members include Dr. Narinder Sidhu, Medical Physics Leader; Dr. Dilip Panjwani, Radiation Oncologist and RT leader for the North; Dr. Matthew Follwell, Radiation Oncologist; and Andrea Wolowski, Director of Clinical Operations for radiation therapy. They join fellow RT staff Dr. Robert Olson, the first Radiation Oncologist hired for the centre last fall, and Nathan Smela, a radiation therapy service technician hired this past spring.

"We have attracted a skilled group of individuals, from BC, Ontario and Saskatchewan, to the Centre for the North," said Dr. Ivo Olivotto, Vice-President for Radiation Therapy and Functional Imaging with the BC Cancer Agency. "The recruitment efforts were greatly assisted through a close collaborative relationship with the Northern Medical Program, and a very welcoming response from medical, clinical and community members, for which I am grateful."

"I have great confidence that these new radiation therapy staff will become a close team over the next year and that they will bring excellent expertise to the care of patients with cancer in the North."

The new group brings a variety of experience to the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North:

- Dr. Sidhu was previously based in Saskatoon, working with the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency as the provincial leader of medical physics for Saskatchewan;
- Dr. Panjwani most recently worked at the Grand River Regional Cancer Centre in Kitchener, Ontario, as medical director for the centre's radiation treatment program;
- Dr. Follwell completed his Radiation Oncology training through the University of Toronto in July 2010 and recently completed a one-year specialized Clinical Research Fellowship at the BC Cancer Agency in Vancouver Centre; and
- Andrea Wolowski, a radiation therapist who grew up in Tumbler Ridge and has been working at the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the Southern Interior in Kelowna for the past decade. She looks forward to "returning home" to the North with her family.

“An increase in the number of specialists providing cancer care in our region helps to augment the services we will have available, thus improving the quality of life for Northern patients,” said Nechako Lakes MLA John Rustad.

Other positions still to be recruited for the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North include additional medical oncologists, radiation therapists, nurses, social workers, clerks and pharmacists.

The \$106 million Northern Cancer Control Strategy is a joint partnership between the BC Cancer Agency, Northern Health and the Provincial Health Services Authority. It is focused on enhancing the continuum of cancer services in the North, including prevention, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and supportive and palliative care.

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