

# Cancer Care

## Patient Newsletter

by Patient & Family Counselling & Psychiatry Services



BC Cancer Agency

CARE + RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

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# CANCER & WORK

Welcome to our Spring edition of Cancer Care, a Patient Newsletter brought to you by Psychosocial Oncology, Patient & Family Counselling and Psychiatry Services.

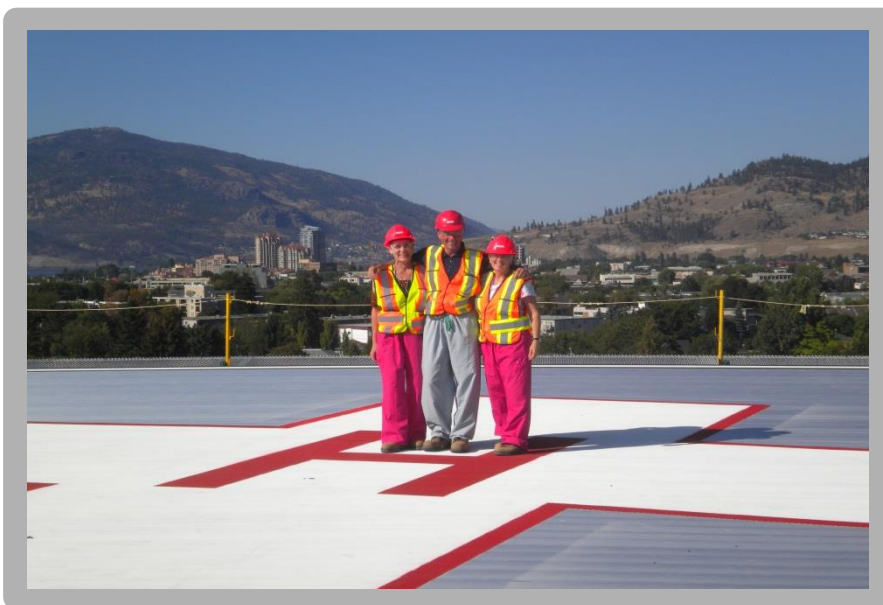
This issue will focus on providing information and resources to help you make decisions about working during cancer treatment or returning to work after treatment. We are here to help you learn the skills needed to manage your life with cancer.

We hope you learn something new or are challenged to share something with others who are going through a cancer experience.



Editor:

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Cancer Care Resource  
Social Worker



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# DISCLOSING YOUR CANCER EXPERIENCE AT WORK



Maureen Parkinson has worked for over 20 years as a vocational rehabilitation counsellor at the B.C. Cancer Agency

Cancer patients can contact her at the Vancouver Cancer Centre

Local: 604-877-6000

Toll-free: 1-800-633-3333

Monday and Friday use extension 672126

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday use extension 672189

By Maureen Parkinson, Vocational Rehabilitation Counsellor, BCCA (adapted from the [original article](#) found on the BCCA website under Coping with Cancer (Work & School))

Your decision to disclose your cancer history to co-workers depends solely on you. You have no legal obligation to tell anyone about your cancer unless it interferes with your ability to work. What you disclose will depend on your work environment, your culture, your relationship with others, and your fundamental feelings about the situation. While in most cases disclosure will improve your work situation, in some cases it can make things worse. Only you can decide whether it is the right thing to do.

However, there are some compelling reasons to bring co-workers into your confidence. They may wonder about your changes in mood and behaviour and the extra time off you have been taking and fill in the gaps with rumours. As well, not disclosing to others may lead you to put up a false front, and maintain a degree of self-composure that only masks very stressful times. By holding back, you may be depriving yourself of useful support that only your co-workers can give you and accommodations you may need to do the job. However the pitfalls of disclosure can be the risk of discrimination or loss of privacy.

Probably the best place to start is by informing your employer. If you need to take time off work, or your work performance is affected, or if you need accommodations your employer can co-operate to make life easier during treatment, recovery and return to work. Your employer doesn't need to know the specific details of your cancer, but only how it might impact your ability to do your job. By law, an employer must "reasonably accommodate" an employee who is experiencing health challenges, but the employee in turn needs to disclose what those challenges are. Your employer can also help explain the accommodations that you need to co-workers, and ensure that they respond appropriately, but should not disclose personal information without your consent. For more information go to [Communicating with your Workplace](#) on the Cancer and Work website.

# NEW CANCER AND WORK WEBSITE

A collaboration between BC Cancer Agency + the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC)+ de Souza Institute + McGill University - [www.cancerandwork.ca](http://www.cancerandwork.ca)

## 9 Steps to Returning to Work

1. Understand your current abilities
2. Understand your challenges
3. Communicate with your healthcare team
4. Consider strategies to improve your work abilities
5. Identify supports
6. Develop a formal return to work plan
7. Prepare for the first days, weeks, months back at work
8. Monitor your progress
9. Manage expectations at your workplace

The Cancer and Work website was designed to address the unique needs of cancer survivors with returning, remaining, changing work or looking for work after a diagnosis of cancer. The website provides newly created information, resources, and interactive tools for cancer survivors, healthcare providers, employers, and highlights helpful information from across the globe.



# SUPPORT FOR RETURNING TO WORK

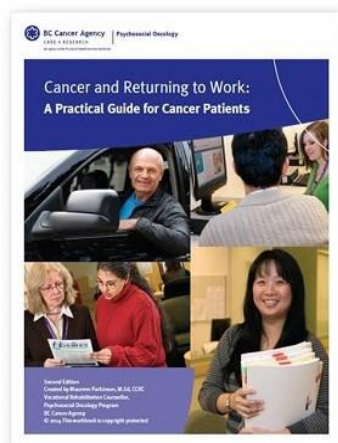
## BCCA Website

### [Coping with Cancer](#)

- Work & School
- Practical Support
- Emotional Support
- Cancer & the Family

### **Cancer and Returning to Work: A practical guide for cancer patients**

Available at your Cancer Centre . BCCA cancer patients can also request a copy [online](#)



Contact Patient & Family Counselling Services and ask about workshops that might be available in-person or through video linkup from a Cancer Centre such as:

- \* **Returning to work**
- \* **Looking for work via social media**
- \* **Job search seminar for cancer survivors**

For all Groups Search the Cancer Centre Support Group Calendars on the BCCA Website:

- [Abbotsford Cancer Centre](#)
- [Centre for the North](#)
- [Centre for the Southern Interior Centre](#)
- [Fraser Valley Cancer Centre](#)
- [Vancouver Cancer Centre](#)
- [Vancouver Island Cancer Centre](#)