A Solid Foundation

A year has passed since BC Cancer established its first ever Provincial Primary Care Program designed to better reflect and serve the needs of primary care providers within the formal cancer care system and to strengthen communication between these levels of care. Much was achieved during this time to build the foundation for this new program which includes all the initiatives and resources offered by the Family Practice Oncology Network – with plans for a great deal more.

- Dr. Cathy Clelland accepted the role of Provincial Lead of the Primary Care Program late last year. A family physician, past Executive Director of the Society of General Practitioners of BC, and Head of the Department of Family Practice at Royal Columbian Hospital, she is also a long-time member of our Network’s Council, and making great strides in moving this important effort forward.

- Earlier this Fall, we concluded a comprehensive primary care needs assessment with our partners at the University of British Columbia’s Division of Continuing Professional Development (UBC CPD). The assessment helped us determine how best to strengthen family physicians’ and primary care providers’ ability to care for cancer patients and included interviews, an online survey distributed to over 5,000 BC/Yukon family physicians plus nurse practitioners and nurses, followed by focus groups with new to practice family physicians, rural family physicians, urban family physicians, and oncologists. The priorities we identified will see us focus our plans and efforts on: 1) advocating for improved access to clinical resources/services for patients; 2) developing primary care practice tools to support patients with cancer; and 3) providing oncology education and training for primary care physicians. We now have a renewed direction and mandate upon which to build.

- We continue as well to develop the pivotal relationships needed to grow this program both within BC Cancer and the primary care community including important linkages with BC Cancer’s Screening, Prevention, and Patient Experience Programs, BC Divisions of Family Practice, UBC Department of Family Practice, and the BC Guidelines and Protocols Committee to name only a few.

- Our small yet mighty team of staff also grew to four members (2.8 FTE) with the addition of Dilraj Mahil as our Administrative Program Coordinator.

Our Core Programs

Meanwhile, the following well established programs and initiatives of the Family Practice Oncology Network continue as part of the Provincial Primary Care Program. Here’s where they are at today:

GPO Education Program

The Network continues to offer its eight-week GPO Education Program designed to give rural family physicians the knowledge, skills, and confidence to deliver chemotherapy in their communities, and to provide full supportive care for cancer patients and their families. Offered twice yearly since 2004, there are now 102 graduates of this program working as GPOs in 37 different BC and Yukon communities. Seven more are in the process of completing the program. These physicians play an integral role in ensuring high quality cancer care is available as close to patients’ homes as possible. They also serve as helpful oncology resources and educators for their local primary care community.

All newly hired BC Cancer GPOs and Nurse Practitioners also complete the foundational Introductory Module of the GPO Education Program as do the UBC Palliative Care Year of Added Competency residents. This program is accredited by UBC CPD on behalf of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, and continues to garner national and international recognition. There is no equivalent program elsewhere in Canada.
**Oncology CME Webcasts**

We also continue to host our complimentary interactive Oncology CME Webcast series with specialists presenting monthly, on relevant and emerging oncology topics. An average of 100 family physicians from throughout BC and beyond participate in every session with many more viewing the recordings posted at www.fpon.ca. This program, launched in 2010, is delivered in partnership with UBC CPD, and is also accredited by UBC CPD on behalf of the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

**Family Practice Oncology CME Day**

This is the Network’s most significant in-person oncology CME offering of the year – an annual conference focusing on the most in-demand oncology topics for primary care. This accredited event, part of this year’s BC Cancer Summit, has been held annually since 2003, with attendance growing from 25 to a capacity 200 during that time. These past four years, the Network also offered an additional focussed event the day prior. This year included our third presentation of GPO Case Study Day, providing in-depth exploration of prevalent and emerging challenges faced by primary care providers working in oncology.

**Journal of Family Practice Oncology**

The Network continues to publish its twice yearly Journal of Family Practice Oncology distributed to all ~5900 family physicians in BC and the Yukon. The Journal, first published in 2003, aims to provide succinct, practice ready oncology information for primary care and provides a means of connection for all involved. (Please let us know if there is a topic you would like to see covered.)

**Cancer Care Guidelines for Primary Care**

Development and publication of brief customized cancer care guidelines for primary care is another ongoing focus of the Network. The Network is partnering now with the BC Guidelines and Protocols Advisory Committee (GPAC) to finalize a continuum guideline on Prostate Cancer including algorithms to help physicians advise patients on testing decisions.

Other recent guideline efforts include:
- A 2017 update to the Network’s first set of guidelines, focusing on Palliative Care, and published in partnership with GPAC;
- The 2016 publication of Primary Care guidelines on Upper Gastrointestinal Cancers; and
- The 2015 partnership with GPAC to publish guidelines on Female Genital Tract Cancers.

**Cancer Care Outreach Program on Education Workshops**

The Network is planning to re-launch its series of small group oncology workshops developed and presented in communities in partnership with UBC CPD. The original series ran from 2010-2016 and included 90 workshops delivered in 35 communities to over 800 family physicians. Modules covered Breast Cancer, Prostate Cancer, Colorectal Cancer, and Advanced Cancers with delivery facilitated by local GPOs. The next iteration of this initiative will come to life in 2019.

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**For More Information**

Visit www.fpon.ca or contact:

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*The Family Practice Oncology Network provides oncology resources and connections to strengthen family physicians’ ability to care for cancer patients in their communities.*