
NEWS RELEASE

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Provincial Health Services Authority

BC Cancer Agency celebrates 75th anniversary

VANCOUVER – Since the very first cancer treatment centre in BC opened in a renovated house in Vancouver in 1938, the BC Cancer Agency has grown to a world renowned research organization that puts patients first in treating and preventing cancer.

Back in 1938, cancer treatment was focused on the use of radiation treatment. Today, cancer experts have a range of leading-edge treatments based on local and global research to tackle the disease.

Throughout the last 75 years the BC Cancer Agency has been at the forefront of many cancer breakthroughs:

- creating the world's first cervical cancer screening program in the 1950s, and reducing cervical cancer rates in the province by 70 per cent
- establishing Canada's first breast cancer screening program in 1988, and decreasing breast cancer rates by 25 per cent in BC
- launching a tissue tumour repository – the first research resource of its kind in Canada
- pioneering oncogenomic research
- discovering that a single gene, CIITA, is implicated in almost 40 per cent of one type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma and 15 per cent of all Hodgkin lymphoma cases, a finding which could help determine how new drugs are developed for lymphoma
- determining that breast cancer can be classified into 10 subtypes
- decoding the genetic make-up of triple negative breast cancer, which could lead to more effective treatment

In partnership with the fund-raising group the BC Cancer Foundation, the BC Cancer Agency expanded and went through numerous name changes as it moved under government administration in 1974: the British Columbia Cancer Institute, the Cancer Control Agency of BC, the British Columbia Cancer Agency, and finally in 1994 to its current name – the BC Cancer Agency.

World-renowned for its research, the BC Cancer Agency continues to attract some of the brightest minds to its two research centres, the BC Cancer Agency Research Centre located in Vancouver and the Trev and Joyce Deeley Research Centre located in Victoria. The BC Cancer Agency partners with industry and other organizations to move discoveries and inventions from the lab to the clinic.

Quotes

Terry Lake, Minister of Health

“Providing 75 years of cancer care to the people of British Columbia is a truly impressive accomplishment. Our provincial approach to cancer care has given BC some of the best cancer outcomes in Canada; and we should all take pride in the fact that the BC Cancer Agency is world renowned for its care, treatment and research.”

Wynne Powell, board chair, Provincial Health Services Authority

“Congratulations to the BC Cancer Agency for a 75 year history of working towards a common goal and putting patients first. As we work towards our vision for a world free from cancer, I’d like to acknowledge past and present BC Cancer Agency employees, physicians and volunteers who support cancer patients across the province, as well as the researchers who have and continue to search for ways to improve prevention, detection, and treatment.”

Dr. Max Coppes, president, BC Cancer Agency

“The BC Cancer Agency is the outstanding institution it is today because of the hard work, passion and bright minds of those that came before us. Our predecessors showed great foresight when they set up a provincial network of care. This system continues today and no matter where a patient lives in BC they have access to the same quality of cancer care.

Quick Facts

- The BC Cancer Agency was established in 1938
- There are currently 3,037 employees, and 728 volunteers
- The BC Cancer Agency has six cancer centres: Abbotsford Centre, Centre for the North, Fraser Valley Centre, Sindi Ahluwalia Hawkins Centre for the Southern Interior, Vancouver Centre, and the Vancouver Island Centre
- As a result of its provincial screening programs, commitment to research and evidence-based treatment standards BC has some of the best cancer survival rates in Canada.

The BC Cancer Agency, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, is committed to reducing the incidence of cancer, reducing the mortality from cancer, and improving the quality of life of those living with cancer. It provides a comprehensive cancer control program for the people of British Columbia by working with community partners to deliver a range of oncology services, including prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, research, education, supportive care, rehabilitation and palliative care. For more information, visit www.bccancer.ca.

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