



RECTAL CANCER UPDATE

A Learning Opportunity for Surgeons and Pathologists @ the BCCA Annual Conference

Improving the understanding and treatment outcomes of rectal cancer are listed as top areas of interest in the educational needs assessment conducted by the BC Provincial Surgical Oncology Council & Network late last year. In response, the Council pursued an opportunity to include dedicated educational workshops on the subject as part of the BC Cancer Agency's Third Annual Cancer Care Conference to be held November 28-30 in Vancouver.



Dr. Terry Phang of St. Paul's Hospital is one of BC's leading experts on colorectal cancer and played a key role in developing a unique, two-day educational program to be included as part of the BCCA's Annual Cancer Care Conference, November 28-30 in Vancouver.

Surgeons and pathologists are invited to take part in the conference overall and gain current, accredited knowledge in the area of rectal cancer. The discipline specific program is offered in collaboration with the BCCA, the BC Surgical Society and the University of British Columbia Department of Surgery. It includes two one-day seminars, featuring several internationally renowned speakers, to be held November 29 and 30 consecutively. As well, surgeons have the option of attending the BCCA Annual Cancer Care Conference, "Immune System and Cancer".

The November 29 program – *Total Mesorectal Excision for Optimum Rectal Cancer Surgery* has a maximum enrollment of 48 participants. This event's focus is:

- to improve the understanding of surgical resection techniques for rectal cancer;
- to review pelvic anatomy;
- to demonstrate total mesorectal excision (TME);
- to demonstrate pathology assessment of resected specimen; and
- to discuss difficult surgical cases.

The agenda includes morning lectures and demonstrations at St. Paul's Hospital and an afternoon lab and discussions at UBC's Anatomy Lab.

As an alternative to the hands-on, limited enrollment session, surgeons may also choose to attend the Friday portion of the BCCA Annual Conference. Delegates to this conference will learn the basic principles of immunology. They will learn and discuss new information about monoclonal antibodies, anticancer vaccines and cytokines. They will learn about gene

therapy, immune cell signaling and the use of the immune system for cancer diagnosis and treatment.

The November 30 program – *Optimum Interdisciplinary Management of Rectal Cancer* – is attracting much interest as well. Objectives include:

- to review outcomes of TME and preoperative radiation;
- to discuss the importance of radial resection margins to outcome;
- to demonstrate a new method for pathology assessment of the rectal cancer specimen;
- to discuss surgical and adjuvant strategies for management of rectal cancer; and
- to discuss a proposal for improving rectal cancer outcomes in BC.

Among the numerous renowned speakers are Brendan Moran, Consultant Surgeon and Head of the Colorectal Unit at North Hampshire Hospital in Basingstoke, England and Dr. Cornelis van de Velde, Professor of Surgery and Head of the Department of Surgical Oncology at the University of Leiden in The Netherlands. Both have extensive experience with TME.

Another valuable aspect of these events is that they bring together both surgeons and pathologists in an environment where they can gain a thorough understanding of each other's contribution plus opportunities for enhancing outcomes. We hope to have as many as 30 pathologists attend the Saturday session.

"The relationship between surgeons and
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MESSAGES FROM THE CO-CHAIRS



DR. NOELLE DAVIS,
Co-chair and
Provincial Program
Leader for Surgical
Oncology,
BC Cancer Agency,
Vancouver

It is almost a year since we published the first newsletter of the BC Provincial Surgical Oncology Council & Network sharing details on the organization's establishment, goals and plans. Having such a record of our development and regularly highlighting progress in our four key areas: communications, clinical practice guidelines, continuing medical education and research and outcomes evaluation makes me realize how far we have come in a relatively short time. It is important not to overlook the value of collective contribution that the Council & Network can make.

Another relevant publication, *Surgical Oncology in British Columbia: Accomplishments and Future Directions*, released just this month by the Provincial Program for Surgical Oncology, provides a more in-depth review of the entire practice in BC including the establishment of the Surgical Oncology Program at the BC Cancer Agency and details on key developments such as the Council & Network, clinical advancements, educational opportunities, research accomplishments as well as our administrative infrastructure.

We refer to this publication as a 'Report Card' for surgical oncology in BC in that it highlights our strengths and capabilities while drawing attention to opportunities and areas where we can improve patient care and outcomes. The document emphasizes surgical oncology's contribution to the BC Cancer Agency's four strategic goals – meeting the need for cancer control, regional implementation of a population based cancer control strategy, knowledge generation and human resources development – including progress to date and next steps.

The report will be available online at www.bccancer.bc.ca/son or by request to our Network Manager, Tina Strack, tstrack@bccancer.bc.ca. We will be using it as a resource to establish the Council & Network's priorities for the year ahead.

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DR. CON RUSNAK,
Co-chair and
Chief of Surgery,
Capital Health Region,
Victoria

Certainly reviewing our past accomplishments is important in planning our future initiatives as is achieving representative consensus on specific objectives and tasks for the months ahead. This is primarily where we will be focusing our efforts at the Council's second

annual one-day planning session to be held early December in Vancouver.

Council members, BC Cancer Agency executives, representatives from all health regions and the Ministry of Health will take part in efforts to build upon the broad goals and strategic directions established last year. The aim for this year's session is to precisely define key objectives and tasks including expected outcomes and action plans that detail the who, how, when and where required for each initiative. As a Council, we are agreed on where we want to focus. Now we need to determine the steps to move our plans forward into reality. The strategic areas we will be delving into include:

- timely access – providing expert and equitable access to surgical consultation;
- improved care outcomes – providing surgical oncology consultation within tumour site specific multidisciplinary care teams and reducing variation in surgical care practice;
- learning – developing research programs related to surgical management of cancer and developing academic teaching programs in surgical oncology; and
- ensuring a sustainable system – supporting evidence-based decision making.

The results of our session will be posted on the Council & Network Web site and will ultimately be perceived through our tangible initiatives and efforts to provide equitable, accessible and integrated cancer surgery for British Columbians.

crusnak@caphealth.org

Communications Progress

Developing tools to encourage interaction throughout the Network and enhance decision making provincially is one of four main functions of the Council & Network. To this end, three initiatives are well underway including:

- **a videoconferencing pilot project** that will enable Council & Network members from throughout the province to

participate face-to-face in discussions and events without leaving their office. Five surgeons are currently testing the technology and Dr. Terry Phang's Rectal Cancer advisory group (see story on Page 1) is also taking part to reduce travel costs and increase participation.

- **providing remote access to patient and clinical information** through Virtual Private Network (VPN) software that

enables physicians to access their BC Cancer Agency patients' electronic health records. Nineteen BCCA physicians are testing the system from home offices. We hope to pilot this with surgeons in the future.

- **the Council & Network Web site** – www.bccancer.bc.ca/son – where key resources are being made available such as Phase I of the BC Atlas of Surgical Oncology including statistics regarding procedure volumes by patient age, patient gender, health authority area, BCCA region and hospital size.

Barbara Poole – Our New Process Leader

The Council & Network's recently appointed Process Leader, Barbara Poole, brings a wealth of experience in effective planning and resource allocation for BC's health sector. Appointed in September 2002, she previously served as Director of Decision Support for the Vancouver Island Health Authority/Capital Health Region where she coordinated development of a 15-year regional service plan. She is also formerly Director of Primary and Rural Health Services for the Ministry of Health where she prepared a provincial plan for primary care renewal in BC.

Her role as Process Leader for the Surgical Oncology Council & Network involves coordinating patient care processes in all four Cancer Centres (Vancouver, Vancouver Island, Southern Interior and Fraser Valley) with the goal of integrating surgi-

cal oncology into the formal cancer care system at each location.

"Barbara's background and expertise are already proving invaluable to us as we begin developing our Surgical Oncology business plan and improvement strategies," stated Dr. Noelle Davis, Council Co-Chair and Provincial Program Leader for Surgical Oncology at the BC Cancer Agency. "She will also play a key role in the development and implementation of practice guidelines into care processes."

"One of the most important areas for me is ensuring the best possible outcomes for patients by providing seamless care throughout the continuum of cancer care," noted Ms. Poole. "Over half of all cancer patients require surgery at some point during their care, so surgeons are often the gateway into Agency services as well."

Barbara commutes between Victoria and

Vancouver and enjoys cycling on the Galloping Goose Trail, walking on the many beautiful paths in and around Victoria and going to the theatre.

Contact Barbara Poole at bpoole@bccancer.bc.ca.



Barbara Poole is working to coordinate surgical oncology processes in all four BC Cancer Centres.

www.bccancer.bc.ca/son

CME UPDATE

Education Events

Developing a high quality continuing education program that meets standards of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons is a top priority of the Council & Network. The Educational Needs Assessment completed this past spring (and available at www.bccancer.bc.ca/son) is guiding efforts in this area beginning with the Rectal Cancer Update later this month (see story on Page 1).

Other CME events planned for the coming months include a presentation on Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy to be given by Drs. Rona Cheifetz and Noelle Davis in Kelowna and an educational session on Ovarian Cancer also to be held in Kelowna. Dates for both these events are being final-

ized and will be posted on the Council & Network Web site as soon as possible. Dr. Cheifetz gave an update earlier this month on Sarcomas of the Inguinal Canal to provincial urologists.

The Council also welcomes requests for specific educational sessions. Network members are encouraged to contact Network Manager, Tina Strack (tstrack@bccancer.bc.ca), to explore opportunities.

MedicalRounds

Another CME opportunity that the Council & Network is offering comes via MedicalRounds.com. MedicalRounds is based in North Vancouver and webcasts multimedia presentations and conferences for many medical groups including surgical oncologists. The presentations incorporate slide images and full-motion video and animations tailored for reproduction of radiographic images and ultrasound movies. Presentations come from a variety of sources including grand rounds and medical meetings. All are available at no cost. An extensive database of links to other free multimedia

medical presentations is also included.

The Council & Network is partnering with MedicalRounds to increase access to relevant lectures and seminars. On September 26, Dr. Michael Kerin, Lead Surgeon, National Breast Screening for Ireland, gave a presentation on "Molecular Insights on Breast Cancer Management" at the VGH Department of Surgery Research Rounds. This will be the first lecture available on the MedicalRounds website.

"MedicalRounds.com is an effective and feasible way to bring our CME events to surgeons anywhere in the province," stated Dr. Rona Cheifetz, leader of the Council & Network's educational initiative, Assistant Professor Surgery at UBC and Surgical Consultant at Vancouver Hospital and the BC Cancer Agency.

Internet Course

Finally, the Council & Network is continuing work on an Internet Course — Searching the Internet and Medline for Literature — and expects to announce a formal launch date soon.

A CME Opportunity: MedicalRounds.com

New Developments: Research & Outcomes Evaluation

The Research & Outcomes Evaluation Committee continues to focus on conducting regionally based analyses critical to Council & Network initiatives.

The Committee's major project to date, the BC Atlas of Surgical Oncology 1999/2000, is progressing:

- Phase I (volumes) has been extended to cover hospital and surgeon volumes, small area variation and referral patterns;
- Phase II (within hospital outcomes) has been piloted with colocolo anastomosis;
- Phase III (re-admittance and mortality) will commence with the receipt of the latest copy of the hospital discharge data from the Ministry of Health, which is expected soon; and

▪ Phase IV (systemic and radiation stratification) is being piloted on the systemic side with colorectal cancer via a joint effort with the BC Cancer Agency's Pharmacy (Jeff Barnett and Pauline Leung) and Population and Preventive Oncology groups (Dr. Andrew Coldman).

Also, the Committee's first paper, *T1a Breast Carcinoma and the Role of Axillary Dissection*, is being prepared, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Nathan Schneiderit (Resident in General Surgery), his supervisor, Dr. Noelle Davis, and the staff of the Breast Cancer Outcomes Unit.

For more information contact the Council's statistician, Murray Mackinnon, mmackinn@bccca.bc.ca.

Clinical Practice Guidelines: Key Issues

A national workshop held in Ottawa this past September explored issues and solutions to enhance the use and effectiveness of clinical practice guidelines (CPG) in cancer care. The Canadian Association of Provincial Cancer Agencies (CAPCA) and the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control Council organized the two-day event that focused on the gaps between CPG availability and their uptake in the health system; the costs and apparent inefficiencies associated with rigorous methods for developing guidelines; lack of information on whether CPGs 'make a difference' to either patients or the healthcare system, and why there seems so much duplication of effort in the field of CPG development, dissemination and promotion.

Staff members, Barbara Poole and Tina

Strack represented the Council & Network at the workshop garnering knowledge to build on its plans for identifying and developing evidence-based guidelines for this province. The BC Cancer Agency's CEO & President, Dr. Simon Sutcliffe, also took part in the event as Chair of the Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control Council.

"Consensus was that we could share systematic CPG quality reviews, but that some local adaptation would likely be necessary," stated Tina Strack. "Keynote speaker, Dr. Thierry Philip, of the Centre Léon-Bérard in Lyon, France presented their highly regarded method of measuring CPG quality and we will be exploring potential applications here."

For full details contact Tina Strack, tstrack@bccancer.bc.ca.

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pathologists is necessary to assure quality of rectal cancer resection surgery and to provide the best information for prognosis and guide for adjuvant chemoradiation therapies," stated Dr. Terry Phang, Chair of the Rectal Cancer Group, Associate Professor with the Department of Sur-

gery at UBC and Head of the Division of General Surgery at St. Paul's Hospital.

Dr. Phang also organized an initial advisory group with members from around the province to draft a preliminary strategy for improving rectal cancer outcomes. This strategy will be presented at the November 30 event. For more information contact Dr. Phang at tphang@providencehealth.bc.ca.

The Council & Network

The BC Provincial Surgical Oncology Council exists to promote and advance quality cancer surgery throughout the province by establishing an effective Network of all surgical oncology care providers and implementing specific recommendations. The Network will enable quality surgical oncology services to be integrated with the formal cancer care system. Communications to enhance decision-making, evidence-based guidelines, a high quality continuing education program, and regionally based research and outcome analyses are the initial priorities.

For more information

The SON newsletter is published quarterly. To submit story ideas/suggestions, to learn more about the BC Surgical Oncology Council & Network or to become involved please contact:

Tina Strack, Network Manager

at the BC Cancer Agency

T: 604 877-6000 (2410)

E: tstrack@bccancer.bc.ca

Visit the Council & Network Web site:

www.bccancer.bc.ca/son

Surgical Oncology Waitlists: We Need Your Opinion

Enabling more timely access to surgical oncology services is a key goal of the Council & Network. The first step is to survey the opinions of surgeons. Future studies will look at retrospective and prospective data collection and analysis. You can contribute to our efforts by completing the enclosed short questionnaire. All respondents will be entered into a draw for a \$300 gift certificate for a holiday at any Fairmont Hotel & Resort.