

**Overview:** The Surgical Oncology Network (SON) was established in 2001 by the BC Cancer Agency to promote and advance quality cancer surgery across BC through an effective network of surgical oncology care providers. As the leading advisory and resource body for surgical oncology in the province, the Network aims to ensure that patients have the best possible outcomes through consistent access to high quality multidisciplinary care. Its main functions are to: promote best practices for quality cancer surgery; enhance access to multidisciplinary patient-centred care; evaluate and improve patient outcomes through research, quality data and reporting; and promote continuous quality improvement of surgical oncology through continuing professional development.

**Purpose:** Surgery plays a critical role in the diagnosis, staging and treatment of cancer. More than half of patients diagnosed with cancer will require some form of surgical procedure during the course of their illness, and about a third of cancer patients will receive only surgery. For many cancers, surgery represents the best hope for cure. While most surgical oncology services are provided in the community, surgery is frequently the gateway into services provided by the BC Cancer Agency. Approximately 22,000 new cancer cases are diagnosed in BC each year and around 60% of these patients are referred to the Agency for treatment. To enhance appropriate, equitable and timely access to surgical services for cancer patients as close to home as possible, the SON supports communication and knowledge sharing between subspecialty and community surgeons, their respective hospitals and Health Authorities, and the formal cancer centres of the BC Cancer Agency.

**Structure:** The SON's inclusive organizational structure serves to lead and support its strategic initiatives. The Council Executive oversees the implementation of the Network's mandate and is comprised of surgeons and senior health administrators representing all the health regions across the province. The three SON Committees - Clinical Practice, Continuing Professional Development & Knowledge Transfer and Research & Outcomes Evaluation - assist with the planning, implementation and promotion of the Network's goals and priorities. In addition, there are thirteen Surgical Tumour Groups, which serve to advise the Council Executive and the Committees on the issues and challenges in the surgical management of patients within each tumour site.

**Activities:** The SON is working to implement strategies to enhance access to multidisciplinary care across the province, develop data collection and reporting processes to evaluate and improve patient outcomes, and design educational programs and materials to promote professional development and continuous quality improvement in patient care. To achieve our vision of the best outcomes for all cancer surgery patients in BC requires communication, collaboration and coordination with our partners across the province. The SON works with Health Authorities, BC Ministry of Health, hospitals, universities, health care providers and administrators across the province to advance the Network's mission of promoting the best surgical oncology care.

## VISION

The best possible outcomes for all cancer surgery patients in British Columbia.

## MISSION

To promote the best surgical oncology care through:

1. Providing strong linkages between the BC Cancer Agency, surgeons and hospitals across the province.
2. Developing partnerships and collaborations provincially and nationally.
3. Integrating quality surgical oncology services into the formal cancer care system.
4. Leadership, advocacy, mentoring and education.

## GOALS

1. To increase recognition of the Surgical Oncology Network as the leading advisory and resource body for surgical oncology in BC, and to foster partnerships provincially and nationally.
2. To evaluate and improve patient outcomes through research and quality data collection, management and reporting processes.
3. To promote continuous quality improvement of surgical oncology through advocacy, mentoring, medical education and professional development.
4. To promote and implement best practices for quality cancer surgery and enhance access to multidisciplinary patient-centred care.

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# SURGICAL ONCOLOGY NETWORK STRATEGY

## **PRIORITY 1: STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE BC CANCER AGENCY, PHSA AND OTHER HEALTH AUTHORITIES, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, UNIVERSITIES AND HOSPITALS, AND ENHANCE SON'S PROFILE PROVINCIALY AND NATIONALLY**

- Ensure surgical oncology representation on the BC Cancer Agency Executive.
- Include surgical representation from each Health Authority on the SON Council Executive.
- Form collaborations with relevant PHSA and Ministry of Health programs and initiatives - eg. Surgical Patient Registry.
- Ensure SON representation on provincial/national initiatives.
- Ensure surgical oncology input on surgical advisory councils.
- Identify and introduce surgical oncology representatives in each health region across the province as key surgical oncology contacts.
- Promote surgeons on the SON Council Executive and Chairs of Committees and Surgical Tumour Groups as key contacts and advocates for surgical oncology.
- Work with BC Cancer Agency to develop models of effective local integration of surgical oncology within the cancer care system.

## **PRIORITY 2: EVALUATE AND IMPROVE PATIENT OUTCOMES THROUGH RESEARCH, QUALITY DATA AND REPORTING**

- Work with the BC Cancer Registry and BCCA Cancer Surveillance & Outcomes to enable a comprehensive assessment of cancer surgery related measures and outcomes.
- Develop synoptic operative report templates and minimal datasets for cancer surgeries (cancer surgery checklists).
- Provide expertise and in-kind support with research design, statistical analyses, administrative and organizational support to SON surgeons with research and quality improvement projects.
- Provide Surgical Oncology Network Travel Award for BC Residents, Fellows & Medical Students to enable them to present research findings at conferences.
- Establish and maintain a provincial directory of surgeons who perform oncology procedures (SON Surgeon Directory).

## **PRIORITY 3: DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT SURGICAL ONCOLOGY PRACTICE IMPROVEMENT**

- Develop and implement professional development programs that meet the standards of The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada - SON Annual Fall Update.
- Develop and publish the SON Newsletter.
- Communicate to surgeons best practices and changes to cancer management guidelines.
- Utilize the SON Surgeon Directory to better communicate with surgeons across the province and identify areas of expertise for particular events or educational initiatives.
- Redesign SON website to improve the dissemination of information to surgeons.

## **PRIORITY 4: PROMOTE BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS AND ENHANCE ACCESS TO MULTIDISCIPLINARY ASSESSMENT**

- Identify, review, adapt, endorse and promote guidelines and standards for the surgical management of site specific cancers in BC.
- Collaborate with the Surgical Patient Registry to report on wait times for cancer surgery in BC.
- Identify quality indicators for cancer surgery and patient outcome measures for quality improvement and practice audit.
- Expand the integration of surgeons who perform cancer procedures into the BC Cancer Agency Tumour Groups and Cancer Centres to enhance multidisciplinary assessment of patients.
- Work with the BC Cancer Agency to facilitate access to expert advice and direction for patient care.
- Work with SON Surgical Tumour Groups to develop patient care maps and cancer surgery checklists.

# SURGICAL ONCOLOGY NETWORK INITIATIVES

## ACCESS TO MULTIDISCIPLINARY CARE

Patient assessment and treatment planning by multidisciplinary cancer conferences optimizes patient care by ensuring that all the appropriate diagnostic tests, treatment options, recommendations and referrals are determined. Multidisciplinary cancer conferences also contribute to standardized patient care and quality improvement activities, continuing education of health professionals, and build linkages and relationships between different health care professionals. The SON is working to implement strategies to enhance access to multidisciplinary assessment throughout the province so that surgeons can participate more readily in multidisciplinary care and have the understanding and knowledge to refer appropriate patients.

## CANCER SURGERY CHECKLISTS (synoptic reports)

To improve the process of care for cancer patients, the SON has made cancer surgery operative report quality a priority to ensure that information is reliably captured in the dictated report. The quality and completeness of an operative report are highly variable and research has shown that narrative reporting does not consistently provide all the information required to make optimal treatment planning decisions. A cancer surgery checklist (synoptic operative report) is a structured, standardized list of data items with a pre-specified choice of responses that clearly and reliably records key information related to the tumour and operative procedure. The SON has developed a standardized process to establish tumour site specific checklists to be used by surgeons when dictating their operative reports.

## CANCER SURGERY WAIT TIMES

The BC Surgical Patient Registry was created by the BC Ministry of Health and the PHSA to provide a reliable, consistent approach for prioritizing surgeries on a wait list via one central registry. Cancer wait time collection and reporting is still in the early stages of development across Canada. The SON is collaborating with the Surgical Patient Registry to identify and report on wait-time statistics for cancer surgeries.

## CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The SON is committed to continuous practice improvement through educational activities and events. Each year the Network develops, organizes and hosts a medical education program profiling a specific area of cancer surgery and care. These all day courses, called the Fall Update, are fully accredited by The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Featuring expert speakers, the Fall Update is designed to improve surgical oncology practice and knowledge by providing the most current information in the field.

## NEWSLETTER

The SON Newsletter is published twice a year and circulated to 600 surgeons and health care providers across the province. Serving as both a communications and educational vehicle, each issue contains a variety of articles highlighting recent developments, publication reviews and important information in the field of surgical oncology. Current and previous copies of the newsletter are available on the SON website.

## NORTHERN CANCER CONTROL STRATEGY

The Northern Cancer Control Strategy is a joint initiative between the BC Ministry of Health, Provincial Health Services Authority/ BC Cancer Agency and the Northern Health Authority to enhance cancer control outcomes for people in northern BC. The Northern Health Authority serves 320,000 residents who are spread over the northern two-thirds of the province. The vast geography of this area means that many cancer patients do not experience the same quality and continuity of care as patients in other regions of the province. The SON is working with northern surgeons to address these disparities by improving knowledge and clinical care.

## QUALITY INDICATORS AND OUTCOMES REPORTING

Data plays an integral part in the SON achieving its vision of best possible outcomes for all cancer surgery patients in BC. The SON is working on identifying measurable quality indicators for cancer surgeries and patient outcomes based on best practice guidelines and standards. The SON continues to work with its partners to identify mechanisms and processes through which surgical data can be efficiently collected for quality assurance purposes. A comprehensive provincial data collection and reporting system would provide surgeons, physicians, health care planners and administrators with the necessary data to support consistent, high quality cancer care for patients throughout the province.

## SON SURGEON DIRECTORY

To support a more strategic approach to implementing Network activities, a provincial directory of surgeons performing cancer surgeries has been developed. The Directory allows the SON to better communicate with surgeons across the province, identify surgeons interested in joining Surgical Tumour Groups and Committees, capture surgeons' areas of interest and expertise, and identify speakers and mentors for various events and educational initiatives.

## SURGICAL CANCER MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Surgery plays a critical role in the diagnosis, staging and treatment of cancer, and surgeons may be called upon to provide diagnostic, therapeutic, palliative and supportive care. All of these issues require guidelines or standards to ensure quality cancer care. Although surgery can play a central role in cancer patient care, cancer management guidelines infrequently include or inform surgical care. The SON is working through its Clinical Practice Committee and Surgical Tumour Groups, along with the BC Cancer Agency Tumour Groups, to adapt, endorse and adopt surgery specific guidelines that will be suitable for BC.

## RESEARCH AWARDS for UBC SURGERY RESIDENTS/FELLOWS & MEDICAL STUDENTS

The **SON Travel Award** is a competitive award intended to motivate physicians and medical students, early in their training, to pursue an interest in surgical oncology and to allow them to present research findings at conferences. Approved applications may be funded in whole or in part up to \$1000 to cover travel costs. The **SON/UBC Summer Student Research Award** is a competitive award to support the funding of one MD student with a project in the field of surgical oncology. A stipend will be provided for up to 8-10 weeks. Please visit the SON website for more information on these awards.

## IMPROVING PATIENT CARE

The SON is making a difference in the care of cancer patients across BC. SON **research and education initiatives** have led to direct improvements in cancer management and reduced variation in practice patterns. SON **standardized cancer surgery reporting checklists** improve the process of care by ensuring that essential information is captured in operative reports, facilitating treatment planning, communication and efficiency among health care providers. The SON Annual Fall Update provides accredited **continuing professional development** to surgeons and is nationally recognized as the most successful and community integrated surgical oncology curriculum in the country. The SON Newsletter **communicates research and best practices** to surgeons throughout the province, helping to ensure consistent, high quality patient care. With **cancer surgery wait times reports**, developed in partnership with the Surgical Patient Registry, the SON can report on wait times for various cancers and procedures across the province. SON **patient information resources** such as the booklet, *Colorectal Cancer Care: A Cancer Care Map for Patients*, help patients to better understand their process of care and the role of surgery in treating cancer. The SON is an **effective network** of over 550 surgeons from all regions across the province **working together to ensure that all cancer patients in BC have the best possible outcomes.**

## SURGICAL ONCOLOGY NETWORK KEY CONTACTS

### COUNCIL EXECUTIVE

#### Position

Chair, SON  
Chair, SON Clinical Practice Committee  
Chair, SON CPD-KT Committee  
Chair, SON ROE Committee  
Chair, UBC Department of Surgery  
UBC Department of Surgery Designate  
Fraser Health Authority Surgeon Rep  
Interior Health Authority Surgeon Rep  
Northern Health Authority Surgeon Co-Rep  
Northern Health Authority Surgeon Co-Rep  
Vancouver Coastal Health Authority Surgeon Rep  
Vancouver Island Health Authority Surgeon Rep  
PHSA - Director, Strategic Program Development

#### Member

Dr. Chris Baliski  
Dr. Noelle Davis  
Dr. Elaine McKeivitt  
Dr. Carl Brown  
Dr. Gary Redekop  
Dr. John Yee  
Dr. James Bond  
Dr. Chris Baliski  
Dr. Nadine Caron  
Dr. Michelle Sutter  
Dr. Sam Wiseman  
Dr. William Orrom  
Ms. Stephanie Sainas

### SURGICAL TUMOUR GROUP AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

#### Surgical Tumour Group

Brain  
Breast  
Colorectal  
Endocrine  
Esophageal/Lung  
Proximal GI  
Gynaecology  
Head and Neck  
Hepatobiliary  
Skin  
Paediatric  
Musculoskeletal, Bone and Soft Tissue  
Urology

#### Chair

Dr. Brian Toyota  
Dr. Elaine McKeivitt  
Dr. Manoj Raval  
Dr. Sam Wiseman  
Dr. John Yee  
Dr. Trevor Hamilton  
Dr. Trevor Cohen  
Dr. Donald Anderson  
Dr. Charles Scudamore  
Dr. Chris Baliski  
Dr. Sonia Butterworth  
Dr. Paul Clarkson  
Dr. Alan So

#### Committees

Clinical Practice  
Continuing Professional Development  
Research and Outcomes Evaluation

Dr. Noelle Davis  
Dr. Elaine McKeivitt  
Dr. Carl Brown

### STAFF

#### Position

Operational Leader  
Manager, Quality Measures, Research and Outcomes  
Program Assistant  
Senior Biostatistician  
Cancer Surveillance & Outcomes Analyst

#### Contact

Yasmin Miller  
Shahin Mahmoodi  
Wade Stow  
Colleen McGahan  
Paul Mak