

Ontario Cancer News



Ontario's cancer system on the right track

The *Ontario Cancer Plan*, Ontario's roadmap for reducing cancer, improving care and preparing for the future, has been in place for one year. The *Ontario Cancer Plan: 2005 Progress Report*, unveiled February 7 in Toronto, shows that Ontario's cancer system is on the right track but sustained action is needed to stay ahead of this slow moving epidemic.

- [Download the Ontario Cancer Plan 2005 Progress Report](#)
- [Read CCO news release and backgrounders](#)



Cancer Drug Assistance Program to help patients pay for cancer drugs

Cancer Care Ontario is piloting a new program aimed at lifting reimbursement barriers so cancer patients can focus on their treatment and physicians, pharmacists and caregivers can concentrate on delivering patient care. The Cancer Drug Assistance Program (C-DAP) pilot will be launched in the Southwest and Southeast Local Health Integration Networks this spring.

"Patients who need costly cancer drugs for serious and often life-threatening diseases like cancer depend heavily on health care professionals to help them navigate through the reimbursement process," said Carol Sawka, provincial vice-president, Clinical Programs, Cancer Care Ontario. "The goal of C-DAP is to make reimbursement for the patient as easy as possible and to ease the administrative burden for health professionals seeking drug coverage information for patients."

C-DAP encourages patients or health care professionals to call a bilingual toll-free support line (1-877-681-6551) where a program professional will investigate reimbursement options for oral chemotherapy and supportive cancer therapies provided outside of hospitals. The program professional then determines a patient's eligibility for coverage and explains how the patient can get drug coverage through both public and private channels. If a patient requires financial assistance, C-DAP will explain all available industry-sponsored programs and will work on the patient's behalf to secure assistance.

To determine the benefits and need for a general reimbursement assistance program for cancer patients, C-DAP will be assessed and information on issues facing cancer patient access to medication in Ontario will be collected during this one-year pilot.



Operating funds for new and expanded cancer programs improve access to care

In January, the Ontario government announced \$19.8-million in operating funds for new and expanded programs at five regional cancer centres. Part of the Post-Construction Operating Plan (PCOP) for the programs, the money will help close the gap between demand for cancer services and the capacity of Ontario's cancer system to provide care, one of six priorities in the Ontario Cancer Plan.

Specifically, the PCOP funding will support 13,693 new and expanded chemotherapy treatments, 41,004 radiation therapy treatments, and 53,567 additional assessment and follow-up cancer services at five cancer centres:

- Carlo Fidani Peel Regional Cancer Centre (Mississauga) – \$11.1 million
- McLaughlin Durham Regional Cancer Centre (Oshawa) – \$4.5 million
- Grand River Regional Cancer Centre (Kitchener-Waterloo) – \$1.5 million
- Northeastern Ontario Regional Cancer Centre (Sudbury) – \$1.5 million
- Northwestern Ontario Regional Cancer Centre (Thunder Bay) – \$1.2 million

As a result of the funding, "more patients will receive the cancer care they need in their own communities," said Terry Sullivan, Cancer Care Ontario's president and CEO.

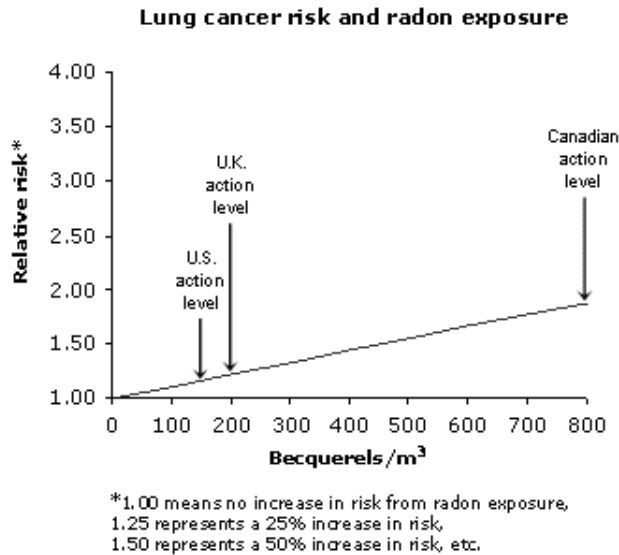
For more information, read the news release and backgrounders on the [Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Web site](#).



Ontario Cancer Fact

Radon is a colourless, odourless, radioactive gas that comes from the natural breakdown of uranium. Radon is a known human carcinogen. It can be inhaled into the lungs and is associated with increased risk of lung cancer in uranium miners. Radon occurs naturally in the environment and can be found in low concentrations in almost all rock and soil. Some of the radon that is produced in rock and soil escapes to the air; therefore, radon is present everywhere in the atmosphere. Outdoor concentrations of radon are typically low, but radon from the underlying soil can penetrate into homes and build up to much higher concentrations, with the greatest accumulation occurring in basements.

A number of studies have examined the relationship between residential exposure to radon and lung cancer risk. In a recent study combining data from across North America, risk has been estimated to increase by about 11% per 100 becquerels per cubic metre (Bq/m³) increase in radon concentration, with no apparent safe level of exposure. In the U.S. it is estimated that 10% to 15% of all lung cancer deaths may be attributed to residential radon exposure. Smokers are much more likely than non-smokers to develop lung cancer from residential radon exposure because the increased risk from being exposed to radon in the home is added to their already increased risk from tobacco.



Health Canada's action level for exposure to radon is 800 Bq/m³. Above this level Health Canada recommends that action be taken to reduce radon concentration in the home. The Canadian level is higher than action levels in the U.S. (148 Bq/m³) and the U.K (200 Bq/m³). Since there is no apparent safe level of exposure, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recommends that Americans should consider fixing their homes if radon levels are at or above 75 Bq/m³. In this country, a federal-provincial working group and Health Canada are currently reviewing a lower Canadian action level.

Unfortunately, there are no recent systematic surveys of residential radon levels in Canada. In a major survey conducted in the U.S., 6% of homes exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's radon guideline of 148 Bq/m³.

If radon exposure is a concern, homeowners can measure radon in the home by purchasing a detector or by contacting a commercial radon measurement service provider. The potential for exposure in the home can be reduced by sealing cracks and openings in walls and floors and around pipes and drains, ventilating the sub-floor of basement floors, and renovating basement floors where there is exposed soil (e.g., floors comprised of concrete slabs).

If you have questions about this Cancer Fact, contact cancerfacts@cancercare.on.ca. If you have questions about cancer statistics, please go to www.cancercare.on.ca/index_requestDatafromCCO.htm#Forms.

People news



Helen Angus has been appointed vice president, Planning and Strategic Implementation. In her new role, she will:

- Focus on cancer system planning, corporate and business planning, and creating a strategic implementation cycle to match the planning cycle;
- Take the executive lead for the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario and provincial planning with the LHINs and the MOHLTC program and policy staff;
- Take the lead on strategic implementation of the innovation process;
- Extend her planning role in the area of health human resources; and
- Act as the executive lead to chair a planning, coordination and implementation group of directors across Cancer Care Ontario's provincial office.

Michael Sherar will step down from his position as regional vice president (RVP) at London Regional Cancer Program to take on a new role as vice president, Regional Programs for Cancer Care Ontario, effective March 20, 2006. Dr. Sherar will work closely with the RVPs across the province to support the continued evolution of quality regional programs. He will have a leadership role in Ontario's cancer system performance management and reporting efforts, and will also take the lead for regional and provincial capital development.

Garth Matheson has been appointed CCO's regional vice president for Royal Victoria Hospital. As recently announced, Garth is also vice president, Regional Cancer and Clinical Services at the hospital.

Dr. Louis Balogh has taken on the role of acting regional vice president, Cancer Services for Southlake Regional Health Centre. A pediatrician, Dr. Balogh is also VP of Southlake's Regional Cardiac Program and Surgery.

Upcoming events

Third annual CQCO signature event, Toronto, March 6 – Experts meet to strategize on the future of palliative cancer care in Ontario



The Cancer Quality Council of Ontario, in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario, will host its 3rd Annual Signature Event "Towards Seamless Transitions in Palliative Care for Cancer Patients" on March 6th in Toronto.

Two hundred participants from the fields of palliative and cancer care will be on hand for the unveiling of a new provincial palliative cancer plan that supports and builds on the Provincial End of Life Strategy. Participants will have an opportunity to discuss and provide input on the implementation of the plan.

Guest speakers will include:

- Senator Sharon Carstairs
- Deborah Dudgeon, Provincial Program Head, Palliative Care, Cancer Care Ontario; W Ford Connell Professor of Palliative Care Medicine, Queen's University
- Frank Ferris, Medical Director, Palliative Care, San Diego Hospice & Palliative Care
- Joanne Lynn, Senior Natural Scientist, RAND Corporation
- Vida Vaitonis, Director, Home Care & Community Support Branch, Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

For information, send e-mail to publicaffairs@cancercare.on.ca.

First North American Conference on UV, Vitamin D and Health, Toronto, March 8, 2006

The first-ever North American Conference on UV, Vitamin D and Health is a collaborative effort between Canada and the United States to clarify the health risks and benefits of unprotected sun exposure. The presentations are geared for those in public health, health care practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and the interested public.

Presentations will be made on the following topics:

- health benefits of UV exposure
- methods of obtaining vitamin D
- health risks of UV exposure
- knowledge, attitudes and behaviours around UV exposure

The registration fee is \$170. For more information, go to the Canadian Cancer Society Web site (http://www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3543_486352054_488978922_langId-en,00.html), or send an e-mail to vitaminD@cancer.ca.

Contact Us

All enquiries and article suggestions should be directed to:

Christine Naugler
Public Affairs
Cancer Care Ontario
620 University Avenue
Toronto, ON M5G 2L7
phone: (416) 971-9800 x 1605
fax: (416) 217-1249
e-mail: publicaffairs@cancercare.on.ca

[return](#)

[Contact Information](#) | [Printable Newsletter](#) | [Subscribe](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [Copyright & Privacy Policy](#) | [Archives](#) | <%bottom_link_end%>