

Newsletter

Issue number 1

December 2001

BC PROVINCIAL SURGICAL ONCOLOGY COUNCIL & NETWORK

ESTABLISHED AND UNDERWAY

With the formal establishment of the BC Provincial Surgical Oncology Council & Network in May 2001, concentrated efforts are now underway to initiate projects aimed at enhancing cancer surgery care in this province.

The Council & Network exist to integrate surgical oncology into BC's organized cancer system and to improve its delivery and outcome for patients – over fifty per cent of patients newly diagnosed with cancer will require a surgical procedure. The BC Cancer Agency (BCCA) is leading this initiative to better coordinate surgical oncology services with the other components of the continuum of care; to provide consistent access to services in terms of timeliness and equitability; and to

develop best practice guidelines and protocols.

Support for the Council & Network has been building for several years. A steering committee undertook extensive planning throughout 2000 including work with a health care consulting group to conduct stakeholder interviews and identify key issues.

In January 2001, the Ministry of Health allocated special funding for the establishment and maintenance of the Council & Network including personnel and resources. Two planning meetings of the newly appointed Council were held in May and June. In October, an all-day workshop was held to confirm the vision of the Network and to provide input into the key initiatives.

The Council

The goal of the Provincial Surgical Oncology Council is to promote and advance quality cancer surgery throughout the province. This function will be achieved through a number of services including a surgical oncology network (described below), education programs, and comprehensive information systems. The Council has the mandate to review and implement practice guidelines and to promote the appropriate and efficient practice of cancer surgery provincially.

The Network

The Network's goal is to establish a structure and a system to enable the integration of quality surgical oncology services into the formal cancer care system. Its 4 main functions include:

- Developing communications tools to enhance surgical decision making provincially;
- Participating in the identification and/or development of peer-reviewed, evidence-based guidelines based on 'best practice' principles;
- Developing a high quality continuing education program that meets standards of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons; and
- Conducting regionally based research and outcome analyses to provide vital information for Network initiatives.

The Network includes all providers of surgical oncology services from surgeons in remote areas to sub-specialists. In the future it will provide strong linkages with all facets of cancer care including the BCCA's 4 cancer centres and its 17 clinics across the province as well as hospitals in rural and urban areas.

Website – Coming Mid-December

The inaugural version of the Surgical Oncology Network

Website will be available by mid-December, 2001.

Please visit the BC Cancer Agency website

(www.bccancer.bc.ca/son)

BC Cancer Agency perspective

BY DR. SIMON SUTCLIFFE,
President & CEO, BC Cancer Agency

The Surgical Oncology Council & Network presents the opportunity to build upon this province's expertise in cancer treatment. Integrating surgical oncology into the continuum of care will ensure patients throughout the province receive the best treatment possible in a timely manner. The BC Cancer

Agency is pleased to lead this effort.

We have made significant progress to date: funding for the Council & Network is in place, resources are allocated and key personnel are being recruited now. A workshop held in October signaled the official start of key activities such as the development of 'best practice' guidelines, a continuing medical education program, a surgical oncology research and outcome analysis program, and communications initia-

tives to encourage interaction and keep the Council & Network informed.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment of those who also play a pivotal role in ensuring the Council & Network's success including the surgeons, care providers, Ministry of Health, the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, the Health Regions, and UBC's Faculty of Medicine. Through this support we will ensure benefits for our patients.

MESSAGES FROM THE CO-CHAIRS



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

The ultimate goal of the Surgical Oncology Council & Network is to enhance surgical cancer care as 'close to home' as possible for our patients. We can achieve this by:

- promoting quality information and best practice guidelines;
- conducting targeted research;
- developing wait list standards; and
- providing flexible continuing medical education opportunities.

One of our first efforts, now well underway, is the development of a web-based surgical oncology network to link surgeons in academic and community environments. The aim is to strengthen communications on educational, research and clinical issues. Ultimately, we will develop on-line learning resources and to this end I encourage you to complete and return the Educational Needs Assessment.

Another initiative includes the development of a Surgical Oncology Registry of cancer operations to help facilitate regional planning and outcomes research.

Finally, the Council & Network are

'works in progress' and the structure and function of both are evolving. We aim to be representative of all practicing surgeons in BC and invite participation and suggestions regarding membership, standing committees, activities and projects.

Along with serving as Provincial Program Leader for Surgical Oncology at the BC Cancer Agency, Dr. Davis is also Head of Surgical Oncology at UBC and Vancouver Hospital. She is a UBC Graduate in General Surgery and completed a Surgical Oncology Fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York City, 1986/87.



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

I view the Surgical Oncology Council & Network as an initiative to streamline surgical cancer care in this province. Our success will see every patient receive the same standard of high quality care no matter where they live.

Every facet of the care process needs to be involved from the regions, to the hospitals, to surgical oncologists, general sur-

geons and physicians. We have the opportunity to build a more effective and efficient system and to enhance the timeliness of care throughout BC. The Council & Network will provide valuable linkages between regions ensuring appropriate resources are available to all.

Extensive planning went into this effort and I am delighted by the progress we have made so far:

- Communications tools, such as this newsletter, and our soon-to-be live website are entering circulation;
- We are establishing the infrastructure required to produce best practice guidelines;
- The first course is soon to be offered through our continuing medical education program; and
- Priorities are defined and work is underway on our research and outcome analyses.

Please join us in maximizing the value of the Council & Network.

Dr. Rusnak is a general surgeon with a strong interest in surgical oncology particularly in the promotion of optimal care and timely access. He is originally from Saskatchewan where he served as a general surgeon and as a professor of surgery at the University of Saskatchewan. He graduated from that same university and completed post-graduate studies at the University of Manitoba. Dr. Rusnak and his family moved to BC in 1986.

Network updates:

Standing committees have been established to undertake and link the four main functions of the Council & Network.

COMMUNICATIONS

Along with this newsletter, a website and video conferencing will be used to encourage interaction throughout the Network and to enhance provincial decision-making.

Internet Course for Surgeons

A course provided in conjunction with the College of Physicians & Surgeons is available on the SON website. It takes you through all steps of an internet search to answer clinical questions.

Surgical Oncology Network Website

SON's website includes everything from posting general information on the Surgical Oncology Program, communicating clinical standards and guidelines for partner hospitals, to accessing databases on surgical oncology outcomes. This site will also be used to facilitate Continuing Medical Education requirements.

BCCA EXTRANET PROJECT

The BC Cancer Agency is launching a new project to provide a secure extranet website for authorized caregivers within the province. As it unfolds over the next five months, the BCCA Extranet will provide the framework to access and exchange patient and clinical information. Through a secure extranet site, Agency partners will be able to share information wherever Internet access is available – at home, at the office, at the hospital or from a remote location.

The Extranet Project Team has identified nine priority areas that will be investigated over the next five months. One of these areas is the development of the Surgical Oncology Network Website. By using this website as a pilot project, the Extranet Team can determine how best to manage this type of information, address security issues and ensure member access.

EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDELINES

Efforts are underway to develop 'best practice' surgical oncology guidelines that are peer reviewed and linked to the BCCA's site-specific tumour treatment policy. They will be based on outcome measurement, multidisciplinary assessment, critical mass (skill/volume), technology and infrastructure. Care processes reflecting the most appropriate treatment plans will result and will be available both through the Website and publication.

CONTINUING MEDICAL EDUCATION

One of the core features of the Council & Network is a strong educational focus. A continuing education/maintenance of certification program is under development to provide learning opportunities for all surgeons in BC who provide oncologic care. Various formats will be offered. The Educational Needs Assessment Questionnaire will help guide the program's development to suit the needs of the surgeons of BC.

Key objectives of the CME Program:

- To provide practical educational opportunities in surgical oncology, in a variety of formats, based on the needs of BC surgeons;
- To offer opportunities that are accredited for maintenance of certification and to achieve recognition as a certified continuing medical education provider (in conjunction with existing providers); and
- To link with existing educational opportunities provided by provincial surgical associations.

Dr. Rona Cheifetz, Assistant Professor of Surgery at UBC and Surgical Consultant at Vancouver Hospital and the BC Cancer Agency, is directing the Council & Net-

work's educational initiative. Dr. Cheifetz is a trained General Surgical Oncologist with an advanced degree in Adult Education. "The education program being developed through the Council & Network is a very exciting initiative. One of our first offerings will be a course, specifically designed for surgeons, on how to use the Internet for CME in oncology. This course is being developed in conjunction with the BC College of Physicians and Surgeons Library. The upcoming website will allow surgeons to connect to existing sites that have been reviewed and selected as valuable educational links. The data analysis from the Needs Questionnaire will allow us to develop programs that suit the current needs of surgeons throughout the province. This is just the beginning!"

RESEARCH & OUTCOME ANALYSES

Regionally based surgical oncology initiatives are now under development to provide surgeons, academics, healthcare planners/administrators and the Ministry of Health with research and outcome analyses vital to the success of the Council & Network.

The first project is to gain a broad overview of surgical oncology in BC using hospital discharge information from the Ministry of Health. This will be extended later with in-hospital outcomes and then

with more detailed information from the BCCA cancer registry.

A second project includes the development of a database that will include all surgeons who are members of the Surgical Oncology Network. This information is key to developing an integrated surgical oncology system with the ability to implement guidelines.



Dr. Rona Cheifetz



SURGICAL ONCOLOGY COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dr. Simon Sutcliffe, President & CEO, BC Cancer Agency, Vancouver
Dr. Noelle Davis, Co-chair and Provincial Program Leader, BC Cancer Agency, Vancouver
Dr. Con Rusnak, Co-chair and Surgeon, Capital Health Region, Victoria
Dr. Lou Benedet, Gynecologic Oncologist, Vancouver Cancer Centre
Dr. Rona Cheifetz, General Surgeon, Surgical Oncology, BC Cancer Agency & Vancouver Hospital
Dr. Andy Coldman, Provincial Cancer Control Strategy Leader, BC Cancer Agency, Vancouver
Dr. Peter Doris, Surgeon, South Fraser Health Region, Surrey
Ms. Sue Emmons, Director, Quality & Utilization Information Support Team, Vancouver Hospital
Dr. Neil Fatin, Medical Consultant, Regional Programs, Ministry of Health, Victoria
Dr. Richard Finley, Thoracic Surgeon, Vancouver Hospital
Dr. Maureen Leia-Stephen, General Surgeon, The Burriss Clinic, Kamloops
Dr. Mike MacLeod, General Surgeon, Kelowna
Dr. David Manson, Chair, Department of Surgery, Providence Health Group, Vancouver
Dr. Dianne Miller, Gynecologic Surgeon, Gynecologic Oncology, Vancouver Cancer Centre
Mr. Tim Murphy, Regional Operations/Cancer Care Coordinator, Vancouver Cancer Centre
Dr. Blair Rudston-Brown, General Surgeon, Nanaimo
Dr. Garth Warnock, Professor & Head, Department of Surgery, Vancouver Hospital

Network updates continued from page 3

Other proposed projects include a prospective survey of surgical oncology waiting lists that will serve as the initiative to develop a database of such information. This would prove a valuable tool in allocating operating room capacity to accommodate cancer cases regionally, or if appropriate, to organize timely transfer of care to centres with surgical expertise.

Network members are also encouraged to bring potential research initiatives forward for review by a Research and



Murray Mackinnon

Outcomes Evaluation Committee. *Inquiries should be directed to the Provincial Program Leader, Dr. Noelle Davis, or to Murray Mackinnon, MSc(NZ), MSc(UBC), CS(RSS), the Council & Network's statistician who joined the BCCA in September – mmackinn@bccancer.bc.ca.*

Prior to joining the Agency, Mr. Mackinnon worked as a medical statistician in New Zealand, and for the past 19 years, in Vancouver. His current interests include data mining and online statistical publishing from web databases.

For more information

To learn more about the BC Surgical Oncology Council & Network or to become involved please contact Frances Lasser, Acting Network Manager at the BC Cancer Agency,
T: 604 877-6000, local 2391
E: flasser@bccancer.bc.ca
or Darlene Denesyk,
Surgical Oncology Secretary,
T: 604 877-6000, local 2391
E: ddenesyk@bccancer.bc.ca

Personnel Progress

Recruitment efforts are underway to fill two full-time staff positions key to the success of the Council & Network and the BCCA's Surgical Oncology Program.

Network Manager – The Network Manager is anticipated to join the initiative early in 2002.

The position includes responsibility for the successful operational management of

the Council & Network including coordination and facilitation of activities throughout the province and within the formal cancer system. The Manager will assist with strategic planning and the development, implementation and evaluation of all projects and activities with specific emphasis on the four main functions of the Network: communication, education, guideline development and research analyses and outcomes.

Provincial Surgical Oncology Process Leader – The Process Leader is responsible for the coordination of surgical oncology patient care processes in all four Cancer Centres and works in collaboration with the Network Manager, Regional Operation Cancer Care Leaders, the Vancouver

Hospital Oncology Coordinator, and Radiation and Systemic Process Leaders at each Cancer Centre. The goal is to develop an integrated surgical oncology process at each Cancer Centre: Vancouver, Vancouver Island, Southern Interior and Fraser Valley.

The position reports to the Provincial Surgical Oncology Program Leader and Vancouver Cancer Centre Administration. It includes responsibility for staffing within the BCCA Provincial Surgical Oncology Group and development and implementation of the Surgical Oncology business plan and improvement strategies in conjunction with the Program Leader. The Process Leader will play a key role in assisting with the development and implementation of practice guidelines into care processes.