
NEWS RELEASE

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Provincial Health Services Authority

BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North celebrates first anniversary

PRINCE GEORGE – Since seeing the first patient on November 1, 2012, the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North has treated more than 550 patients closer to home.

Prior to the Centre opening, patients requiring radiation therapy had to travel to Vancouver or other BC Cancer Agency locations throughout the province. Now two radiation therapy machines called “linear accelerators” provide radiation therapy to northern cancer patients. This saves patients both time and money. The two machines are affectionately named after two rivers —The Fraser and The Nechako.

Other Highlights:

- **Brachytherapy:** Since 2013, people in BC’s central interior have also had access to brachytherapy. This type of radiation therapy involves placing a small radioactive source in or near a cancerous tumor, which allows for a high dose of radiation that increases the likelihood the cancer is destroyed while reducing the risk of damage to nearby healthy tissue. Over the last year the Centre for the North has performed brachytherapy treatment on patients with endometrial cancer.
- **Palliative care:** The availability of radiation therapy in this part of the province also improves access for palliative patients to receive treatment. Palliative radiation therapy is not intended to cure, but to relieve symptoms and pain caused by cancer. Of the Centre’s 418 radiation therapy patients, about half of them have been palliative.
- **Left-breast cancer therapy:** specialized treatment for left-breast cancer is also now available. This type of reduced radiation treatment is important to ensure less radiation is delivered near the heart and lungs.
- **First clinical trial:** In October 2013 the Centre for the North opened its first clinical trial, NCIC MA.33, a randomized trial for early breast cancer patients. This clinical trial is studying the difference between standard whole breast radiation versus standard whole breast radiation plus an eight day boost of radiation to the surgery site.
- **Chemotherapy:** While providing radiation therapy is an important part of what the Centre for the North does, it also provides systemic therapy (known as chemotherapy). Since opening last year, the Centre for the North has treated 144 patients with systemic therapy.

- **Additional services:** The Centre for the North also includes patient and family counselling, psychiatry services, nutrition support, and cancer care support for northern Aboriginal communities.

The BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North works alongside Northern Health, and the University of Northern British Columbia to ensure that cancer patients get the best care possible.

Quotes

Terry Lake, Minister of Health

“As a provincial agency, it is essential that the services provided by the BC Cancer Agency are accessible to all British Columbians. The BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North ensures that people living in the northern part of the province have the same access to the very best in cancer treatment and care.”

Shirley Bond, MLA for Prince George-Valemount

“It is hard to believe that it has already been a year since we opened the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North. For decades northerners have wanted to see cancer treatment closer to home and now we have exactly that,” said Shirley Bond, MLA for Prince George-Valemount. “The Centre plays a vital role in supporting and caring for people living with cancer and we are grateful for the amazing group of healthcare professionals who work tirelessly to ensure that we receive top notch cancer care, closer to home.”

Mike Morris, MLA for Prince George-McKenzie

“B.C. has a strong network of cancer prevention and treatment services, which ensure that British Columbians continue to have some of the best survival outcomes in the country. As we celebrate the first anniversary of cancer care at the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North, it is great to know that the Centre is providing a suite of comprehensive patient services that will benefit northerners now and into the future.”

John Rustad, MLA for Nechako Lakes

“Almost all of us have been touched by cancer in some way – as patients, family members, or friends. Having access to cancer care closer to home can make a huge difference to patients and their loved ones and as a region we celebrated each milestone as the BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North was built. The Centre was the result of a true community effort and over the past year has provided hundreds of northerners with access to the cancer care they need – right here in the north.”

Wynne Powell, board chair, Provincial Health Services Authority

“The Provincial Health Services Authority is committed to ensuring that British Columbians have access to a coordinated network of high-quality specialized health care services. The work undertaken by the BC Cancer Agency as part of that network guarantees that residents, no matter where they live in the province, have access to the very best cancer care and research.”

Dr. Max Coppes, president, BC Cancer Agency

“I am delighted to celebrate the first anniversary of our sixth cancer centre. The BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North is an integral part of our provincial approach to cancer care and research. We are looking forward to using this Centre as the province’s northern cancer research hub. Congratulations to the dedicated staff of the BC Cancer Agency, and to our

community partners and volunteers who have helped make the Centre for the North a success on its first anniversary.”

Quick Facts

- The BC Cancer Agency Centre for the North opened on November 1, 2012
- It has treated 562 patients in its first year of operation
 - 144 patients were treated with systemic therapy
 - 418 patients were treated with radiation therapy
- 95 staff at the Centre for the North
- 31 volunteers

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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