

# Noteworthy

by JAMES D. GOWING

## Moving Forward

Shortly after the Federal Government announced the establishment of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (CPAC) the Executive of the Cancer Advocacy Coalition met with the Chair of CPAC, Mr. Jeffrey C. Lozon who asked what CACC felt was the most important first step in implementing a Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control. Without hesitation, we indicated that surveillance is required in order to move forward with cancer control. We applaud the steps that CPAC has taken to change the landscape in Canada and to begin to collect more useful data. A large step forward was the establishment of a national lead for synoptic pathology and a group of pathologists to champion the standards for synoptic pathology reporting across Canada. The Partnership brought together surgeons from across the country to create synoptic report templates for broader use and distribution. National standards for the content of reports are being established across five surgical and disease site areas—breast, colon, rectum, ovary and head and neck cancers. We recognize these initiatives as important steps in moving cancer control forward.

## Déjà Vu Over and Over and Over Again

For years we have been using the funding of rituximab as an example of the inequities of access to cancer drugs and funding across Canada. For five years, the British Columbia Cancer Agency has been able to obtain funding for rituximab for patients with chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Three phase III trials now show a survival advantage, but Ontario and other provinces, while posting on their websites that rituximab is the recommended treatment, are unable to persuade their ministries to find the necessary funding. If our patients had arthritis or other immune disorders they would likely find the drug easier to access. Even with the coming of a Pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review, it will not benefit all Canadians without a Pan-Canadian plan for meeting the funding problem.

**CACC believes in advocacy** and is committed to speaking openly about cancer issues, to highlight the concerns of patients and families, and to press governments for a more effective response to the enormity of the cancer problem in Canada. We forego charitable status to retain this freedom. Through the generosity of sponsors and donors, we use unrestricted grants to collect information, consult with cancer experts and families, and lobby governments for improvements. Sponsorship guidelines can be found on our web site.

If you are one of the millions of Canadians concerned about the state of cancer care, tell your federal MP and your provincial MPP/MLA. Make sure the people you elected to govern know that cancer is a priority to you and should be for them.

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