

News Release

Canadian Oncology Community Unites For World Cancer Day: Shedding Light on the Impact of Covid-19 on Cancer Care

- *Oncologists estimate cancer diagnoses are down 25 per cent in some cancers as a result of COVID-19*
- *Some oncologists are also reporting an increase in later stage disease for newly diagnosed patients*
- *This World Cancer Day, an alliance of more than 25 healthcare organizations is urging Canadians to reprioritize cancer screenings, check-ups and care*

MISSISSAUGA, ON, February 4, 2021 /CNW/ – Just over one year since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in Canada, new data now reveals the far-reaching impact of the pandemic on cancer care. A Metrika survey on the impact of COVID-19 on Canadian oncology practices revealed that 80 per cent of oncologists believe COVID-19 has had a moderate to severe impact on diagnoses and assessment of new or potential cancer patients in their care.ⁱ Today, on World Cancer Day, an alliance of more than 25 healthcare organizations from across Canada, with support from AstraZeneca, is teaming up in support of ***New Normal, Same Cancer***, a public awareness campaign encouraging Canadians to get back to cancer care.

Before the pandemic, it was estimated that more than 225,000 Canadians would be diagnosed with cancer in 2020.ⁱⁱ COVID-19 however, has led to a significant decrease in new diagnoses. According to the Metrika survey, oncologists estimate a 16 per cent decline in overall cancer diagnoses compared to 2019,ⁱ with new diagnoses of bladder cancer and ovarian cancer down by more than 25 per cent.ⁱ The survey also revealed an estimated five per cent increase in late-stage disease for newly diagnosed patients compared to 2019.ⁱ Medical experts are concerned that further delays in cancer diagnoses and evaluation will have an increasingly negative impact on patient outcomes.

“When the pandemic began, our healthcare system went into acute crisis response in order to limit COVID-19 transmission, but the ripple effect it has had on cancer care is alarming, and we are already seeing the profound impact,” said Dr. Shady Ashamalla, MD, MSc, FRCSC, Surgical Oncologist, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, University of Toronto. “Delays in diagnostics, evaluation and treatment can lead to more advanced cancers, limited therapeutic options and access to clinical trials, and ultimately lead to poor patient outcomes. That is why it is absolutely critical that patients don’t wait. We are urging those with cancer or possible cancer symptoms, or even routine screenings to re-engage with their healthcare team for the care they need.”

According to a January 2021 Leger survey from the Canadian Cancer Survivor Network, delays in cancer care have also had a significant impact on patient mental health, with 72 per cent of patients, pre-diagnosed patients and caregivers saying they feel anxious about receiving adequate care during the pandemic.ⁱⁱⁱ Heightened anxiety is compounded by the uncertainty around the availability of healthcare services and a fear of contracting COVID-19. Among those who are avoiding booking an appointment with healthcare practitioners, 44 per cent say COVID-19 exposure is their main concern and 11 per cent believe their healthcare teams are not taking appointments, or are difficult to access.**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

This World Cancer Day, the *New Normal, Same Cancer* initiative is reminding Canadians that cancer does not wait and neither should you. Healthcare providers are working hard to ensure that clean and safe pathways are available for patients in need of in-person care. They can also help patients understand

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their options for receiving care. Whether it is through virtual consultations or scheduling in-person appointments now or in the near future, it is important that those living with cancer, or experiencing suspected cancer symptoms contact their healthcare providers right away.

Canadians living with cancer who have had their treatments paused, and those experiencing possible cancer symptoms or who have missed routine checks, are encouraged to re-engage with their healthcare providers to get the care they need. Don't wait, contact your healthcare team. Get checked.

About New Normal, Same Cancer

New Normal, Same Cancer was developed in response to the delays in cancer care. It is a global initiative designed to raise awareness of the need for people to get back to cancer care services despite the disruption caused by COVID-19. AstraZeneca and eight global coalition partners developed the campaign in partnership for roll-out to countries around the world.

In Canada, New Normal, Same Cancer is supported by more than 25 Canadian healthcare organizations, including: Association des médecins hématologues et oncologues du Québec (AMHOQ) Association pulmonaire du Québec, Bladder Cancer Canada, Cancer Research Society, Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology, Canadian Breast Cancer Network, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Cancer Survivor Network, Canadian Liver Foundation, Canadian Urological Association, Colorectal Cancer Canada, Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation, Fondation Québécoise du cancer, Gastrointestinal Society, Kidney Cancer Canada, Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada, Life Saving Therapies Network, Lung Cancer Canada, Lung Health Foundation, Myeloma Canada, Ovarian Cancer Canada, Pancreatic Cancer Canada, PROCURE - The Force Against Prostate Cancer, Quebec Cancer Coalition, Rethink Breast Cancer, and the Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada.

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ⁱⁱⁱ Leger. Impact of COVID-19 crisis on cancer patients and their ability to receive treatment – wave 2. On file