

Provincial Breast Health Strategy

Working together to improve breast cancer prevention, screening & diagnosis in BC

November 8, 2011

Provincial Breast Health Strategy Update: Moving from planning to implementation

The Provincial Breast Health Strategy (PBHS) is now moving from information gathering and planning to wider implementation. Input from the people and organizations that provide, plan or support breast cancer prevention, screening and diagnosis services is critical to the success of the PBHS.

PBHS project teams have been working on initiatives to improve BC's breast health system. Although health authorities and community partners are represented on these teams, the next step is to share some of the key initiatives more widely with leaders from BC's health authorities, as well as other partners and stakeholders.

BC's breast imaging leaders and professional staff recently heard an update on the PBHS at the annual Screening Mammography Forum. Over the next few months, PBHS leaders will be meeting with the health authority administrative and clinical leaders responsible for breast diagnosis and prevention services to brief them on the PBHS progress so far and seek their feedback on the newly developed recommended diagnostic clinical pathway. An overview of the work of the PBHS project teams is below.

Clinical Pathway

- This team has developed a recommended breast diagnostic clinical pathway designed to map out the woman's journey from receiving an abnormal mammogram result, or the finding of a physical breast abnormality, to the point where she receives a diagnosis. The goal is consistent, timely care for women throughout BC.
- The pathway is based on a "hub and spoke" model, with health authorities designating hospitals of their choice as breast imaging centres (hubs) to provide advanced imaging services and image-guided biopsies as needed. It's important to note that this approach is already happening in BC - the pathway is designed to build on innovative models that already exist. After discussions with HA leaders have taken place, the goal will be to pilot the pathway in a small number of centres early in the New Year. The recommended clinical pathway will be posted to the [PHSA website](#) following feedback from health authority leaders.

Digital Mammography

- Much work has been done to develop a provincial strategy for digital mammography. The goal is to replace the remaining analog (film-based) units used for screening or diagnostic mammography **and** enable IT connectivity between the Screening Mammography Program of BC (SMPBC) and the health authorities to facilitate the diagnostic clinical pathway.
- A provincial RFP for digital mammography systems was issued by Health Shared Services BC (HSSBC) over the summer. The RFP was initiated because several health authorities had foundation funding available to purchase mammography units. Submissions are currently under review. The RFP will also be used to inform a provincial digital mammography business case that will be submitted to the Ministry of Health this fall.

Prevention

- The work of this team includes primary and secondary breast cancer prevention. The secondary prevention work has been focused on updating BC's current screening mammography policy. The

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objective is to ensure that the screening mammography program targets women who will receive the most benefit. As a first step, the BC Cancer Agency (BCCA) commissioned an external evidence review in 2010. A Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) Task Force on Preventive Health Care has also been reviewing the evidence on breast cancer screening. After the task force recommendations are released later this year, the BCCA/PHSA will look at all of the evidence before making a policy recommendation to the Ministry of Health.

- Many public and non-profit agencies provide women with information about breast cancer prevention. One of the objectives of the PBHS is to ensure that this information is consistent and evidence-based. With representatives from government, the health authorities, UBC, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society, the Prevention Team is working on consistent messages that can be used by all agencies. Plans are also underway to create a breast cancer prevention social marketing strategy. This will be centred on a partnership website that contains clear, evidence-based messages to help women understand the most common risk factors for breast cancer, as well as information about screening and early detection.

Workforce

- This team is focused on developing increased capacity in the system by addressing recruitment, retention and training.
- To date, the team has identified recruitment and retention issues for breast imaging professionals; reviewed cross-training programs for mammography and ultrasound technologists; reviewed fellowship programs for breast-imaging radiologists; identified generic coordinator/navigator role descriptions for patient navigators and administrative coordinators; and looked at barriers within MSP that impact the breast diagnostic clinical pathway.
- Work in progress includes developing better linkages with family physicians to help women without their own physician/primary health care provider access screening mammography; working with UBC to implement a Chair in Breast Imaging; piloting mammography-ultrasound cross training opportunities; and developing a marketing strategy to increase interest in breast imaging among medical radiation technologists (MRTs).

Integration Team

- Consisting of the co-chairs of the PBHS and the chairs of the project teams, the Integration Team brings consistency by identifying and monitoring overlapping issues and initiatives. This team is also looking at potential models for shared governance and management of screening mammography, and is establishing a set of performance indicators that can be tracked by health authority and local health area.

For more information, please contact Project Director Lynn Pelletier at lpelletier3@phsa.ca, send an email to pbhs@phsa.ca, or visit the PBHS pages on the [PHSA website](http://phsa.ca).

Led by the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA), the Provincial Breast Health Strategy (PBHS) is focused on improving breast cancer prevention, screening and diagnosis so that fewer BC women die from breast cancer. The co-chairs are Jan Christilaw, president of BC Women's, and Brian Schmidt, interim president of the BC Cancer Agency. The PBHS participants are the Ministry of Health, the six health authorities, physicians and key community partners, including the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, the Canadian Cancer Society, the BC Radiological Society, UBC and BCIT.