



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Northwestern Ontario leading the province in access to cancer care and patient satisfaction

Still work to do with rising rates of obesity, alcohol use and smoking

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Thunder Bay – The 2008 Cancer System Quality Index (CSQI), released today, shows Northwestern Ontario as a leader in several areas of cancer care delivery:

- We are number one in Ontario (and Canada) for patient satisfaction
- Breast screening – we're number two in Ontario with nearly 68 per cent of all eligible women being screened
- We score the highest overall in Ontario for Access to Care
 - We are number one for lifetime access to radiation therapy and in the “ready to treat – treat” wait time category.
 - We are meeting chemotherapy wait time goals
 - We are meeting or surpassing wait time goals for most cancer surgeries
- Palliative Care – significant growth in our program thanks to the ESAS pain and symptom management project

“Regional Cancer Care is also doing well in the areas of cancer staging and we have the highest guideline concordance for breast and colon cancer treatment. This translates to providing the best possible treatment for each patient,” says Dr. Kenneth Gehman, Medical Director, Surgical Oncology.

Dr. Dimitri Vergidis, Chief of oncology at Regional Cancer Care calls the report “a reflection of outstanding performance by a team committed to the delivery of cancer care in Northwestern Ontario.”

“Our regional cancer program in the Northwest is second to none. We continue to lead Ontario in many of the cancer treatment, diagnostic and surgical wait times and are a high performer in Canada for overall patient satisfaction. That’s a tremendous accomplishment,” says Michael Power, Vice President, Regional Cancer Services and Diagnostics. “We look forward to improving our performance even further over the next three years and tackling some of the challenges presented in this CSQI report.”

The challenges are areas in which Ontarians require more effort and improvement, according to the web-based CSQI report. Ontarians need to take steps to reduce their risk of cancer including alcohol consumption, sun exposure and smoking. Northwestern Ontario continues to have the highest rates of obesity, smoking and alcohol use in Ontario, and these rates are increasing rather than decreasing.

“The Index allows us to evaluate progress and shine a light on where we need to improve,” says Terrence Sullivan, PhD, President and CEO, Cancer Care Ontario. “Cancer Care Ontario together with our partners will step up efforts to promote healthy living, boost screening rates and ensure that high quality and safe cancer services are available everywhere in the province.” Cancer Care Ontario continually improves cancer services so that fewer people get cancer and patients receive





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better care. The Cancer Quality Council of Ontario monitors and reports to the public on the quality and performance of the cancer system.

Overall, the 2008 Cancer System Quality Index demonstrates that key cancer services throughout Ontario are more accessible, timely and safe, while additional effort is needed to raise screening rates and address the needs of Aboriginals and other underserved communities. The quality and safety of cancer services also continue to improve as more cancer drugs are ordered and managed electronically and more services are being delivered according to evidence-based quality standards.

Regional Cancer Care at Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is a leader in the implementation of new technologies. Regional Cancer Care is the first cancer centre in Ontario to go live with synoptic reporting, meaning our pathologists and surgeons use a standardized software tool called mTuitive to ensure consistency in reporting pathology results.

"mTuitive has been a very valuable tool recently added to our pathology practice. It allows us to report on cancer parameters in the most up to date and standardized way to facilitate appropriate patient management," says Dr. Joseph Wasielewski, Chief of Pathology, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre.

The Northern Cancer Fund of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre contributed \$200,000 toward the installation of mTuitive, which ultimately improves patient care.

"The people of Northwestern Ontario continue to benefit from the outstanding performance of the Regional Cancer Care Team and the generosity of Donors who fund leading edge patient care tools," says Ken Bittle, Chair of the Board, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Foundation. "Clearly, there is a return on investment for donors to our foundation. The Health Sciences Foundation, through its Northern Cancer Fund, remains committed to excellence in cancer care in our region."

The Index was launched in 2005 by the Cancer Quality Council of Ontario, in partnership with Cancer Care Ontario. Now in its fourth year, the Index presents a rolling snapshot of activity in 32 key indicators that cover the spectrum of cancer services, from prevention through to end-of-life care.

Link to the Cancer System Quality Index via the Cancer Care Ontario website at www.cancercare.on.ca

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