

DEVELOPING A CANADIAN COMMUNITY-BASED INTEGRATIVE ONCOLOGY RESEARCH AGENDA

April 24 & 25, 2012; Ottawa, ON

On April 24th and 25th 2012, 19 oncology health care practitioners, researchers, decision makers and patient advocates gathered in Ottawa, Ontario to:

1. Reaffirm the essential elements of integrative oncology, including a vision and guiding principles.
2. Reach consensus on Canadian community-based integrative oncology research priorities and a research agenda.
3. Develop strategies and an action plan to implement a Canadian community-based integrative oncology research agenda.

The meeting builds upon a 2008 workshop on a vision, principles and research priorities for integrative oncology, also organized by the ICON Research Initiative.

➤ PRE-MEETING DELPHI SURVEY

A 3-round Delphi survey was conducted before the meeting to obtain input, and work towards consensus, on research priorities for integrative oncology from a wide range of stakeholders. Throughout the three Delphi rounds, in which 81 people participated, five priority research areas were identified: *Clinical Effectiveness, Developing Practice Models, Education and Training, Cost Effectiveness* and *Safety*. There was clear consensus through all Delphi rounds that *Clinical Effectiveness* is a top research priority, but consensus was not obtained regarding the relative importance of the remaining four areas within a research agenda but rather that all areas are profoundly interrelated and need attention.

➤ PRE-MEETING INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews were conducted with six meeting participants before the meeting in order to explore emergent ideas about integrative oncology and related research in Canada, and to identify any possibly divergent perspectives among participants and stakeholder groups. Interview participants agreed that the five priority research areas from the Delphi survey provided a strong foundation for a Canadian research agenda, but there were varying opinions about the rankings that emerged: some agreed with the rankings, some offered different rankings and one found ranking difficult and thought all areas “go hand in hand”.

➤ 2-DAY IN-PERSON MEETING

Nineteen participants attended a 2-day meeting in Ottawa including oncology practitioners, researchers, decision-makers and patient advocates. During the meeting, a variety of formats were used to facilitate egalitarian and productive dialogue, including small group work, facilitated group discussions and brainstorming through a “speed-dating” format. Two brief didactic presentations were offered to set the stage and provide background for the meeting, and to describe the Delphi process and results.

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Primary planning and coordination of the workshop was overseen by Dr. Dugald Seely, Founder and Executive Director, Ottawa Integrative Cancer Centre, and Dr. Laura Weeks, Research Associate, Ottawa Integrative Cancer Centre. The workshop was facilitated by Bonita Ford.

Objective 1: To reaffirm the essential elements of integrative oncology, including a vision and guiding principles

There was extensive discussion as to whether the goal within integrative oncology is to have the underlying philosophies guide all of cancer care, or whether integrative oncology should become a specialty form of care offered to those who want it or could benefit most. Participants acknowledged this discussion would best be held with a larger, more representative group of integrative oncology stakeholders from across Canada, and agreed that future discussions should be guided by the distinguishing elements of integrative oncology as outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: Distinguishing Elements of Integrative Oncology

- Patient- and Whole-person Centred
- Collaboration and Teamwork
- Empowerment
- Evidence, Wisdom and Trust

Objective 2: To reach consensus on Canadian community-based integrative oncology research priorities and a research agenda

Overall, there was consensus that the five priority research areas from the Delphi process should form the basis for an integrative oncology research agenda for Canada. Each stakeholder group placed different emphases on the importance of each research area; however, participants agreed that all areas are interrelated and should be considered and ideally included in all research. A preliminary research framework began to emerge that participants felt could guide a Canadian research agenda, as well as individual studies within the agenda.

Box 2: Participant suggestions to refine a preliminary research framework

- *Education and Training* → *Knowledge Translation*
- *Clinical Effectiveness* → *Effectiveness*
- *Cost Effectiveness* → *Economics/Resource Appropriateness*
- *Developing Practice Models* → *Developing and Evaluating Integrative Oncology Models*
- Ensure a balance between *Effectiveness* and *Safety*
- Ensure *Safety* weaves through and underlies all other priority areas

Objective 3: To develop strategies and an action plan to implement a Canadian community-based integrative oncology research agenda

Participants brainstormed potential research opportunities and collaborations that reflect their range of interest and expertise, and subsequently identified (through a voting process) projects in which they could potentially become involved. The six strategies around which most of the votes clustered are outlined in Box 3. Participants agreed these areas represent the core for a Canadian research agenda and outline the groundwork necessary to more clearly define an action plan to implement the emerging agenda.

Box 3: Research strategies to implement an emerging research agenda

- a) National network for research and knowledge translation
- b) Needs assessment
- c) Describe and evaluate existing collaborative care and integrative oncology models
- d) Identifying relevant outcomes
- e) Linking health records for research and outcome measurement across established programs
- f) Decision-aids for integrative oncology practice

A working group for each of the six strategies outlined in Box 2, to further refine the overall emerging research framework, were identified. Post-meeting follow up to develop a more detailed action plan and to further explore research opportunities and collaborations will occur via email, and will be initiated by staff at the Ottawa Integrative Cancer Centre.