

count me in 4 tomorrow

Keeping you informed about Alberta's *Tomorrow Project*, a research initiative designed to discover more about what causes cancer and other long-term health conditions.

VOLUME FIVE - ISSUE ONE - FALL 2014

VISIT: WWW.IN4TOMORROW.CA

The Final Push to 50,000!

Thanks to your involvement, our goal of recruiting 50,000 Albertans is very close to reaching fruition; we are only 3,000 volunteers away. If you know a friend or family member that may be interested in joining the project, now is the time to act! We will be ending active recruitment on March 31st, 2015.

With your continued participation in our project and your aid in spurring others to take part, Alberta's Tomorrow Project aims to understand more about the causes of cancer, so that one day fewer Albertans hear those terrible words, "You have cancer." Together we can work towards a cancer free legacy for future generations.

Have you donated a sample?

The process is as easy as ever. We have mobiles across the province, as well as a dedicated study centre in Calgary. Due to high demand, we have increased the frequency of our mobile study centres this year and by the end of 2014 we will have facilitated 140 mobile study centres. To see if there is an upcoming mobile in your area, please call, visit our website, or follow us on social media.

In addition, the national Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project has recently passed an incredible milestone. Over 300,000 Canadians are now a part of the pan-Canadian study. What an amazing achievement!

For more information, or if you would like to share a comment, we would love to hear from you! Our contact information is below.

Please Help Us Keep Our Files Up To Date

Alberta's Tomorrow Project is a long term study and staying in touch with participants is important for the project's success.

Keeping current participant contact information reduces the number of participants who are 'lost to follow up.'

Please take a moment to contact us with any changes or additions to your contact information. Even if you move outside of Alberta or Canada, we can send you information and updates.

Contact Us

Email:
tomorrow@albertahealthservices.ca
Toll free telephone: 1-877-919-9292

Outside Canada:
1-403-955-4617 (call collect)

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Alberta's Tomorrow Project Assistant John Steyn at the Grassroots Farmers' Market. (June 2014)

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Cancer Researcher Dr. John Lewis (July 2014). Photo Courtesy Dr. John Lewis.

Sitting Down with Dr. John Lewis, University of Alberta Cancer Researcher

We recently had an opportunity to interview Dr. John Lewis, a researcher using Alberta's Tomorrow Project samples in his work on prostate cancer.

Tell me about yourself, your educational history, and why you decided to get involved in cancer research.

I hold the Frank and Carla Sojonyk Chair in Prostate Cancer Research at the University of Alberta, and I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Oncology. In addition, I am a Fellow of the National Institute of Nanotechnology and Chair of the Alberta Prostate Cancer Research Initiative (APCaRI).

I received my B.Sc. Honours in Genetics at the University of Western Ontario in the Department of Genetics and a Ph.D. in Biochemistry at the University of Victoria. I pursued post-doctoral training in Nanotechnology and Imaging at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, CA.

Before joining the University of Alberta, I held the Robert Hardie Chair in Translational Prostate Cancer Research at the London Health Sciences Centre in London, ON. In my new position at the University of Alberta, my objective is to build a world leading prostate cancer research group that can make contributions to our knowledge of prostate cancer and its impact on patients.

I became interested in cancer research during my training in California, where I met long time friend and collaborator Dr. Andries Zijlstra.

At the same time, my father-in-law was diagnosed with and eventually passed from metastatic kidney cancer. I was shocked at the lack of knowledge about the disease, about the treatment of metastasis, and the low level of treatment sophistication. I decided to switch my focus to enhancing our knowledge and creating improved tools to diagnose and treat metastatic cancers.

I am actively involved in advocacy and public awareness programs for prostate cancer. In my spare time I enjoy surfing, snowboarding and mountain biking.

What do we know about prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in Canadian men. One in seven men will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime, and it is responsible for one tenth of deaths in men from cancer. Prostate cancer is diagnosed through the administration of a simple blood test for prostate specific antigen (PSA) and a digital rectal exam, followed by a biopsy.

Once prostate cancer is diagnosed, however, the choice of treatment is no easy task. No one dies from prostate cancer that stays in the prostate – the spread, or metastasis, of prostate cancer is what makes it so dangerous. The five year survival rate for localized prostate cancer

in North America is close to 100%, yet this drops to 30% for metastatic disease.

What do we know about PSA tests?

As many are well aware, there is considerable public debate surrounding the PSA test and its usefulness for screening for prostate cancer. The main issue is that only 30% of men with elevated PSA actually have prostate cancer. We have developed some exciting technologies, specifically new blood tests, that could substantially improve upon PSA testing to diagnose prostate cancer. More importantly, these tests could better predict which patients will need aggressive treatment for their cancer and which patients may be able to avoid treatment (and their associated side effects) altogether.

How are Alberta's Tomorrow Project samples used in your research?

With our current technology, we have already developed a version of our test that works on patient biopsies, and we know that this test is able to predict cancer recurrence after surgery and the development of metastatic disease. The blood samples from Alberta's Tomorrow Project are essential for us to determine whether a more convenient blood test based on the same technology is equally as useful.

Do you have any messages for those who have been a participant in Alberta's Tomorrow Project for a while?

First of all, THANK YOU! It is wonderful as a cancer researcher in Alberta to have this amazing resource right here at home. With this kind of research, the long term follow-up of participants is essential for us to have solid data on which to base firm conclusions. The longer the participation, the more valuable and more useful the information.

What about those Albertans who know friends and family who might be interested, but still haven't decided to come in?

Go for it! As researchers looking at cancer screening, our greatest risk is having too few samples to analyze, because *almost* getting an answer is the same as *not* getting an answer at all. The more people who participate in this amazing project, the more valuable and useful it becomes - not only for researchers here in Alberta, but throughout Canada and worldwide.

“Both my parents died of cancer. Join me, and together, with all of our contacts, we will find the cure we need, so our grandchildren will read about cancer as a past event.”

DES HANNA
TOMORROW PROJECT AMBASSADOR

Watch for invitations to the Healthy Hearts and Minds Study!

The main goal of Alberta's Tomorrow Project is to support research into the causes of cancer. However, we now know that many of the factors that influence cancer risk are likely to play a role in affecting the health of our hearts, brains and blood vessels.

In 2008, cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke, accounted for just over a quarter of all deaths in Canada.¹ Furthermore, dementia is on the rise, with some estimates suggesting that 1.4 million Canadians will be living with the condition by 2031.² While some of the risk factors for cardiovascular diseases and dementia are known, many more questions about the underlying causes remain.

A group of researchers, known as the Canadian Alliance for Healthy Hearts and Minds (CAHHM), is launching a large study to find answers to some of these questions. They hope to enroll 9,700 participants from across Canada to undergo MRI scans and complete a series of short surveys that will provide some insight into factors that affect the health of people's hearts, brains and blood vessels.

On behalf of the CAHHM team, we will be sending out invitations to randomly selected participants in the fall of 2014. Please remember that you are free to choose whether or not to join the Healthy Hearts and Minds study; participation is completely voluntary.

The Healthy Hearts and Minds study is supported by the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. Nationally, the research team is led by Dr. Sonia Anand of McMaster University, Dr. Matthias Friedrich of the Montreal Heart Institute and Dr. Jack Tu of the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences in Toronto. In Alberta, the lead investigator is Dr. Eric Smith of the University of Calgary.³

Who's Who in Alberta's Tomorrow Project

Like many Albertans, Val Boehme's family has been stricken by cancer. His grandmother passed away from cancer in 1939. His mother recently passed from pancreatic cancer, his brother-in-law dealt with tongue cancer, and his son-in-law was challenged by acute myelogenous leukemia. When he first joined the study, several coworkers had passed away from cancer. After so many incidents of cancer in his family and among his friends, he decided to turn his passion, energy, and dedication towards cancer research. "My daughter and I had taken part in the Ride to Conquer Cancer, and when I heard about Alberta's Tomorrow Project, it seemed like yet another great way I could help fight this terrible disease."

Following a visit to our Lethbridge Mobile Study Centre in May of 2013, where he gave a blood and urine sample, Val saw a sign about our Ambassador Program, and leaped at the opportunity. After reading our newsletter about the towns with the highest per capita enrollment, Val sprung into action. He felt it was so easy to be a participant; he wanted to go one step further. After mulling over what he could do to get involved, he began to connect with the town councils of Raymond, Magrath, Taber, and Cardston. He also connected



Alberta's Tomorrow Project staff outside of the Raymond Agricultural Society Heritage Centre (May 2014)



Ambassador Val Boehme with Study Centre Coordinator Bryce Hirsch in Raymond. (May 2014)

with the local MLA and the Rotary Club of Raymond to form a Southern Alberta "Healthy Challenge". The ultimate goal? To get Raymond on the list of highest per capita participants, while creating a friendly competition to help facilitate cancer research.

Hugh Simpson, Raymond Community Services Director, said, "When Val sets his heart on something, it typically becomes a big event. He's very good at getting the community involved."

The Raymond Rotary Club, of which Val is an active member, decided to endorse Alberta's Tomorrow Project as one of their projects for the year, to honor Val's mother, Fontella Rasmussen Boehme.

The next step, of course, was for the project to visit small town Raymond, population 4,000, for a mobile study centre. Much to the credit of the town, all available appointments were quickly booked up, and over 140 participants donated a blood sample over the 3 day mobile.

Val explains, "Through Rotary and my faith community I've been involved in international humanitarian campaigns, but Alberta's Tomorrow Project is one way each of us can make a difference in our own community."

Alberta's Tomorrow Project is proud of the phenomenal response they've received from Alberta to date, and are excited to see many more participants take part in this life changing study.

¹ Statistics Canada. Leading cause of deaths in Canada, 2008, CANSIM Table 102-0561. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/84-215-x/2011001/table-tableau/tbl001.eng.htm> - last accessed 16th August 2014.

² Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Information about Alzheimer's and related dementias. <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45554.html> - last accessed 27th August 2014.

³ <http://www.ucalgary.ca/esmithresearch/projects/cahbm>

“Cancer doesn't run in our family. It gallops.”

LYNETTE JAMES
TOMORROW PROJECT PARTICIPANT

Diet and Nutrition in Alberta's Tomorrow Project

Diet and nutrition play an important role in maintaining health and wellness. Much more still needs to be understood about the types of foods and diets that influence risk of cancer and chronic disease.

Assessing the diets of our participants throughout the province poses a big challenge. It isn't feasible to employ dietitians to interview every participant in the cohort; a two hour interview and coding for everyone in the study could potentially take three to four years to complete.

An approach that is cost effective, logistically feasible and as valid as possible is needed to properly assess the types of food and drink people consume.

The US National Cancer Institute has developed two new surveys that can be delivered online. One is a questionnaire about foods consumed over the past year – known as the Canadian Diet History Questionnaire II (CDHQ II).

The questionnaire is designed to assess usual diet. The second survey is structured to ask about foods consumed in the previous day – the Automated Self Administered 24 hour recall (ASA-24).

Both of these surveys have been adapted for use in Canada and are potentially a good way of assessing diet in Alberta's Tomorrow Project. Before committing to these questionnaires, we need to be sure that they work for all of our participants, regardless of their geographical location.

Over the next six to eight months, we will be testing these two different online diet assessment tools, and will be sending out invitations between now and the summer of 2015 asking for your participation.

The first survey (CDHQII) is already underway. We are sending invitations to 632 randomly selected Alberta's Tomorrow Project participants with the objective of

Alberta's Tomorrow Project - By the Numbers!

138 >>>>	Number of Tomorrow Project mobile study centres to date (as of September 18, 2014)
220,557 >>>>	Number of kilometers our vans have travelled (enough to travel around the world 5.5 times!)
57 >>>>	Average age of our participants
27,584 >>>>	Number of blood samples collected (as of September 18, 2014)
844,373 >>>>	Number of total samples we have received (as of September 18, 2014)
211,482 >>>>	Number of questionnaires we have received since our inception (as of September 18, 2014)
Onoway (11%) >>>>	Town/city with most participants per capita
Sundre (6.1%) >>>>	Town/city with the second most participants per capita
Rimbey (5.6%) >>>>	Town/city with the third most participants per capita



Alberta's Tomorrow Project staff at The Underwear Affair (June 2014). Photo courtesy Sombilon Photography (2014).

testing the feasibility, acceptability and repeatability of the online questionnaire.

If you have any questions about this exciting new phase of the study, please feel free to call or email us. Further testing on the ASA-24 tool will begin in January and similar invitations will be issued. Look for updates on the results of these endeavours in future newsletters.

“With the advances already being made by using research from Alberta's Tomorrow Project, the outlook for a cure for cancer in my lifetime is very promising.”

COLLEEN LEISER
TOMORROW PROJECT PARTICIPANT



Alberta's Tomorrow Project

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