

# Tomorrow's News

Volume 9, Issue 1

February 2009

*The Tomorrow Project® - Albertans Studying the Connection Between Lifestyle and Cancer*

## Who's Who In The *Tomorrow Project*

In December 2008, the first Alberta participant in the national cohort study, known as the *Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project*, visited our Study Centre in Calgary. Michelle Ball, a *Tomorrow Project* participant since 2004, was also the first person in the entire country to take part in the national project!

At the end of Michelle's Study Centre visit, we asked her what she thought. Other than navigating Calgary's unplowed streets on a bitterly cold morning, Michelle said her experience at our Study Centre went very smoothly. It was exactly what she was expecting from reading the information package that she had received in the mail.



Michelle having her blood pressure measured during her Study Centre visit

Michelle works for the Calgary Health Region as an ultrasound technologist. She works in echocardiography, taking ultrasounds of hearts. Working in a hospital, she sees a lot of patients with cancer. When Michelle initially agreed to participate in the *Tomorrow Project* she decided to join because she had lost too many friends to cancer and had too many people in her life affected by cancer. For someone who believes that we need research if we are ever going to understand more about cancer, saying no was just not an option. Michelle participates in the *Tomorrow Project* for a friend who has been battling cancer for five years and for all of her other friends who have been affected.

In Michelle's spare time, she builds rustic furniture and she exercises. With a gym set up in her home, she manages to fit in three to four workouts per week! Being physically active is something that has always been part of her life. She remembers being part of the ParticipACTION generation, and also swam competitively and ran marathons.

Diagnosed at a very young age, Michelle has been living with multiple sclerosis (MS) for the past 34 years. She strongly believes that her physically active lifestyle contributes to her quality of life. When Michelle was diagnosed, her prognosis was not very good so she thought she should see the world while she could. She went to England for a holiday and stayed for four years. Michelle also lived in Africa for two years, and during her international travels visited 32 countries and has seen half of the world. Looking back, she is glad that she experienced as much as possible of the world when she was young and able to. Indeed, one of the mottos that she lives by was triggered by learning to live with MS: "Do what you can today because you don't know what tomorrow is bringing."

## **The Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project: Study Centre Opened in Calgary**

In our last newsletter, we announced that we were partnering with other researchers throughout Canada to build a national study called the *Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project*. Throughout last fall and winter, we worked closely with our partners to develop harmonized procedures for the national study. We thought we would take this opportunity to update you about what will be involved if you choose to accept our invitation to take part.

Waves of invitations and information packages will be sent out in the mail to people who are already taking part in the *Tomorrow Project*. The letters will invite you to consider completing some updated questionnaires, and to think about making an appointment to visit us at a study centre to have some measurements taken and to donate samples of blood and urine.

### **Study Centres**

Study centres will be set up specifically by the *Tomorrow Project* throughout Alberta. Our first centre was opened in December 2008 at the former Holy Cross hospital site in Calgary. About 600 of our Calgary-based participants have already been invited to make an appointment to visit us. More invitations will be sent out in the next few months. We anticipate that the second and third study centres will be opened in 2009 in Red Deer, followed by Edmonton. Additional sites will be established in other areas around Alberta between 2010 and 2012. As each study centre is opened, we will send invitations and information packages in the mail to all our participants who live in the surrounding areas.

### **Questionnaires**

The researchers working to develop the national study have developed a set of core questions that will be asked of all 300,000 people who consent to take part in the project. In Alberta, we have divided these questions into two questionnaires that will be mailed out with our invitation package. One is called the “Update: Health and Lifestyle Questionnaire” and the other is called the “Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey”.

### **Study Centre Visit**

If you decide to visit us at one of our study centres, your visit will involve four stations. First of all, we will ask you some questions to check some information that might affect your results on several of the measurements, and to make sure that you will be able to complete all parts of the visit. We will then invite you to have some physical measurements taken. These measurements are explained in more detail in the rest of this article. At the third station, a trained technician will then ask if you are willing to provide samples of blood and urine. If you cannot give blood, we may ask you to consider giving a sample of saliva instead. Finally, one of our staff will go through your questionnaires with you to make sure that we have understood all of your answers correctly.

### **Physical Measurements**

We have ten measurements that we hope to carry out. All of the measurements will be taken with you wearing your normal clothes. We will not ask you to remove anything other than your shoes, socks, and bulky outer wear. At the end of your visit, if you would like to have the results of your measurements, a report will be given to you. The report will give you your own results as well as average results seen in other people your age and sex.

---

### Blood Pressure and Resting Heart Rate:

Blood pressure will be taken with an automatic blood pressure cuff. A cuff is wrapped around your arm and inflated, but a stethoscope is not required. A sensor within the monitor detects your blood pressure as the cuff deflates. The sensor also detects your heart rate during the blood pressure measurement.



### Sitting and Standing Height:

Height will be measured with a stadiometer, which is basically a ruler with an arm that adjusts over your head. You will need to remove your shoes, and stand on a platform as tall as possible while the arm on the stadiometer is brought down to the top of your head. Sitting height is similar, except that the platform of the stadiometer is placed on a box and you sit on the platform.

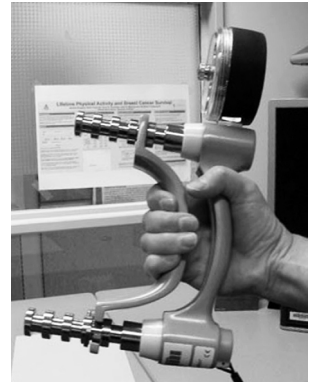


### Waist and Hip Circumference:

To take these measurements, a specially designed metal tape measure will be used. These measurements are the same as the abdomen and buttocks measurements that we have asked you to take on yourself in the past. Waist circumference is measured around your body at a point just above your hip bone. Hip circumference is measured around your body at the largest part of your buttocks.

### Grip Strength:

Grip strength will be measured using a hand dynamometer. This is a device with two bars that you wrap your hand around. We measure one hand at a time and we ask that you squeeze your hand as hard as you can as though you are trying to make a fist while the dynamometer records the amount of force that you are using.



### Weight and Percentage Body Fat:

Body weight will be measured using a scale that is very similar to a standard bathroom scale, where you stand on a platform while the scale detects your weight. The scale also measures the amount of fat in your body, using bioelectrical impedance. While you are standing on two metal foot plates on the scale, a very small electrical signal is applied to your feet. The signal is so weak that you cannot feel it. The scale senses the length of time it takes for the signal to pass through your body. The electrical signal moves fastest through water, and since muscle and fat contain different proportions of water, your percentage body fat can be calculated.



### Heel Bone Densitometry:

An ultrasound machine will be used to measure the quality of bone in your heel. You will be asked to place one of your feet into the machine where it will be held in place with a toe peg. Two water filled balloons will fill on either side of your heel and the machine sends an ultrasound signal through the water and through your heel. You will not be able to feel the signal. Based on the strength of the signal, the machine estimates the quality of the bone in your heel.

## We Have Moved!

In January 2009, all of the *Tomorrow Project* staff moved within Calgary from the Tom Baker Cancer Centre to the Holy Cross site. The move was part of an initiative to make more space available at the Tom Baker Cancer Centre for care of cancer patients.

We have now settled into our new home and are just waiting for a few finishing touches to be taken care of. Although our mailing address has changed (see below), mail sent to our old address is still reaching us.



**Toll-free telephone line:** One challenge associated with the move was the smooth transfer of the toll-free telephone line. We apologize for the inconvenience this may have caused for many of you who tried to contact us during the transition period. After about four weeks of trouble shooting, the phone line seems to be up and running consistently again, and we are grateful for your patience and understanding.

## Please Help Us Keep Our Files Up To Date

Because the *Tomorrow Project* is a long term study, staying in touch with participants is an important part of our work because it 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. Remember, we can send you information wherever you live, even outside Alberta or Canada.

### Need to contact us?

**Email:** [tomorrow@cancerboard.ab.ca](mailto:tomorrow@cancerboard.ab.ca)  
**Toll-free telephone:** 1-877-919-9292  
**Outside Canada:** (403) 476-2466 (call collect)  
**Mail:** *The Tomorrow Project*  
Box ACB  
2210 2 Street SW  
Calgary, AB T2S 3C3 Canada  
**Web site:** [www.thetomorrowproject.org](http://www.thetomorrowproject.org)

ISSN 1911-0987



**Alberta Health  
Services**

