

February 3, 2014

PROVINCE ANNOUNCES ACCESS TO IMPROVED CANCER SCREENING

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New Colon Cancer, Lynch Syndrome Testing Available to Patients: Minister Selby

New testing procedures to help identify patients at a greater risk for inherited colon and other types of cancers are now in place including testing for Lynch syndrome, a disorder that significantly increases the risk of developing cancer, Health Minister Erin Selby announced today.

"Identifying the risks for cancer is critical to providing the most appropriate care possible to the patient and at-risk relatives, and we're pleased to offer this screening in our province," Minister Selby. "This testing will give patients, their families and their physicians the information they need to make informed decisions about treatment options, risk factors and a lifetime care plan."

All colorectal cancer surgery patients aged 70 years and under will receive testing for Lynch syndrome. As a result of this testing, patients will have access to increased cancer surveillance which could lead to earlier detection and improved cancer survival rates.

Immediate family members of affected patients will also benefit from this new testing, as it will help to identify their risk of developing cancers and allow them to consider early detection and prevention measures, the minister said. Manitoba's cancer strategy highlights the importance of genetic testing in early diagnosis as this type of screening can help oncologists tailor treatment for patients to provide the most effective form of chemotherapy, she added.

"No one wants to find out they have cancer or that an inherited genetic mutation caused it. Worse still is seeing the cancer connection in your family but not knowing what it is," said Megan Tucker, who is living with Lynch syndrome. "To be able to do the test right here in Manitoba is a wonderful step. Testing followed by routine screening for the cancers allows me to be active in monitoring and managing my cancer risk and increases the overall chances of extending my life."

Diagnostic Services Manitoba (DSM), the organization responsible for Manitoba's public laboratory and rural diagnostic imaging services, is now offering these new tests. Genetic testing for breast cancer is also available and further expansion of genetic screening for other forms of cancer, such as melanomas and lung cancer, is being explored, Minister Selby said.

"We have a commitment to provide the results that matter to our patients, and the topic of inherited colon cancer and Lynch syndrome testing has been an emerging issue for the past several years," said Jim Slater, chief executive officer of Diagnostic Services Manitoba. "We understand how the local availability of this important genetic testing will help to save lives through earlier diagnosis, monitoring and treatment, and we are pleased to offer this testing right here in Manitoba in partnership with CancerCare Manitoba and the province."

Patients who have inherited the Lynch syndrome gene have up to a 60 per cent risk of developing colorectal cancer at some point over the course of their life. Women with Lynch

syndrome have up to a 60 per cent risk of developing endometrial cancer over the course of their life.

"With financial support from the CancerCare Manitoba Foundation, this unique joint effort enables genetic testing that can be life-saving," said Dr. Sri Navaratnam, president and chief executive officer of CancerCare Manitoba. "Detection of colon cancer at its earliest stage means a 90 per cent survival rate and Lynch syndrome testing is one more tool in our arsenal against this deadly form of cancer."

The minister noted this investment builds on the province's commitment to shorten the cancer patient journey. The \$40-million IN SIXTY initiative strives to expedite cancer testing and treatment for patients when cancer is first suspected to help get patients the most appropriate care as quickly as possible. The province also now provides costly cancer medication free to patients to help alleviate the burden of this disease on families.