

Advanced Practice for Radiation Therapists

Report from The Ontario Radiation Therapy Advanced Practice (ORTAP) Steering Committee
March 2004 Bulletin

An "Advanced Practice Symposium for Radiation Therapists" was held in Toronto on September 23rd, 2003, to examine advanced practice issues in radiation therapy. Radiation Therapy professionals attended from most provinces in Canada. The Symposium was organized by a volunteer group of Ontario Therapists, Managers and Educators whose interest was to push the advanced practice agenda forward in this province. Therapists and consultants from Britain were invited to present the 4-tier practice model currently being piloted in the UK. This British model is grounded with education initiatives supporting all aspects of the program. Many attendees voiced interest in the British model and wanted to ensure that this Ontario initiative would not stagnate. The Symposium organizers promised to keep the participants updated on any future progress and anticipated the formation of a website to facilitate this communication.

Since the end of the Symposium, the volunteer group has continued to meet to strategize around the idea of advanced practice roles in Ontario (ORTAP). Results from the evaluations at the Symposium indicated that many therapists were in favour of advanced practice roles and the group wanted to ensure the momentum from the Symposium continued. The Symposium group understands that politically Ontario is vastly different from Britain and advanced roles would have to meet the needs of our own province. The group also realizes while this is a professional practice evolution, it could not happen without the initial support of Cancer Care Ontario (CCO), Princess Margaret Hospital, Radiation Oncologists and the Michener Institute/University of Toronto. The group, originally constituting Managers, Therapists and Educators, expanded to include Oncologists and a representative from the Michener Institute and the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Toronto.

The first step for the new group was to create a Terms of Reference (see Appendix A) and Vision/Mission statement for the project. The group then contacted Dr. Tony Whitton (Provincial Head of Radiation Treatment for CCO) on whether the ad-hoc group could become a formal Steering Committee under the auspices of CCO. This became official in February 2004. One of the group's first decisions was to consult Ontario Radiation Therapy Managers in order to collect data on how to position any initiatives related to advanced practice in Ontario. The first activity planned was an e-mail survey and interviews with Managers. This exercise was designed to examine the current types of role extensions, determine if there is a need for a formal advanced practice role or roles, and identify challenges and opportunities for an advanced practice therapist. Marcia Smoke (Head/Manager of Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre), as ORTAP Chair, has reported on these activities to the CCO Radiation Therapy Professional Advisory Committee (the Ontario Managers) at their monthly meetings.

The Steering Committee had planned to send this preliminary survey to the managers in early March 2004, when they were informed that the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) were interested in pursuing the advanced practice concept. The MOHLTC wanted to meet with the group to discuss funding proposals for a pilot study. Subsequently a representative of the MOHLTC joined the committee. In general, the MOHLTC asked that the group expedite its plan to further explore advanced roles in Ontario, and to expedite the development of a project proposal dealing with a possible two-year pilot project to study the efficacy of proposed advanced roles. In addition to the exploration of advanced roles, the MOHLTC also requested that the group explore the potential role of an assistant therapist. This

is in keeping with the original 4-tiered approach presented by our UK colleagues in September 2003.

As part of the proposal a one-day managers workshop was proposed to replace the e-mail survey originally proposed. This workshop will be held on Friday March 26th, 2004, and is the first big step toward creating an advanced practice pilot project. The objectives of the workshop are to determine what the impact of advanced practice will have on the day-to-day operations of a radiation program in a cancer center, how these roles will be budgeted and implemented, how outcomes will be measured, etc. The workshop will also discuss the feasibility of assistant roles in Ontario Centres. This is the first step in the process, pilot roles will not be implemented without detailed and collaborative research involving all stakeholders, most importantly Ontario's Radiation Therapists.

The Steering Committee intends to continue communicating their activities with the radiation therapy community. The website creation was severely hampered by CCO integration changes and the group was unable to find a suitable (cost-free) host server. One of the group members is currently hosting a rough website on her personal home account with some Symposium information available. However, access is extremely limited. If anyone would like access, please contact one of the members of the group. Funding for the website is now available, the Steering committee is in the process of contracting out the website and will hopefully have a web address by the next bulletin.

Please feel free to contact...

ORTAP members:

Dianne Belfour
Amanda Bolderston
Pam Catton
Mary Gospodarowicz
Nicole Harnett
Donna Lewis
Marcia Smoke (chair)
Julie Wenz
Tony Whitton

**ONTARIO RADIATION THERAPIST ADVANCED PRACTICE (ORTAP) STEERING COMMITTEE
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

PURPOSE

1. To coordinate activities related to the development of Advanced Practice Initiatives in Radiation Therapy.
2. To facilitate the implementation of Advanced Practice initiatives in radiation therapy departments in Ontario

PROJECTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. To develop a provincial survey to determine current practice patterns.
2. To facilitate the collection and interpretation of the results of the surveys.
3. To review the supporting evidence in the literature.
4. To develop a time-line.
5. To develop a proposal for Pilot Projects in Advanced Practice in Ontario Cancer Centres.
6. To facilitate working groups from the radiation therapy community to assist with the implementation of pilot projects.
7. To facilitate the collection and interpretation of the results of the Pilot Projects.
8. To provide Cancer Care Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care with a summary of the pilot projects.
9. To identify and implement other projects as required.
10. To communicate the activities of the steering committee to the radiation therapy community.

MEMBERSHIP

- Chair - Manager/Head of a Regional Cancer Centre
- Radiation Therapist
- Radiation Therapist Educator
- Dean of Diagnostic Imaging and Therapy, Michener Radiation Sciences Program
- Director of Radiation Therapy, PMH
- Radiation Therapist Project Specialist for Developing Centres
- Director of Education, University of Toronto, Dept of Radiation Medicine
- Chair, Department of Radiation Oncology
- Provincial Head of Radiation Treatment, CCO
- Representative from the MOHLTC
- Other Experts and Consultants as required

LENGTH OF TERM OF MEMBERSHIP

Each representative will serve for the term of the project.

REPORTING MECHANISM

The Steering Committee will report to the CCO Radiation Treatment Committee.

MEETINGS

The committee will meet monthly. Minutes will be kept of all meetings.

CURRENT MEMBERSHIP

2003-2004

Chair - Manager/Head of a Regional Cancer Centre	Marcia Smoke – Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre
Radiation Therapist	Donna Lewis
Radiation Therapist Educator	Amanda Bolderston
Dean of Diagnostic Imaging and Therapy, Michener Radiation Sciences Program	Nicole Harnett
Director of Radiation Therapy, PMH	Julie Wenz
Radiation Therapy Project Specialist for Developing Centres	Dianne Belfour
Director of Education, Department of Radiation Oncology, University of Toronto	Pam Catton
Chair, Department of Radiation Oncology, University of Toronto	Mary Gospodarowicz
Provincial Head of Radiation Treatment, CCO	Anthony Whitton
MOHLTC Health Planning Branch Representative	Kelly McGregor
Other Experts and Consultants as required	NA

