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Winter Newsletter

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of Canadian Virtual Hospice

This month we mark 20 years of Canadian Virtual Hospice!

A lot has happened in two decades, but our commitment to meeting the evolving needs of people living with serious illness, loss and grief, the needs of their bio and chosen families and friends, and those of the healthcare providers and researchers who lead progress in palliative care, remains unwavering.

Looking back...

Canadian Virtual Hospice went live on February 3, 2004, thanks to a small passionate group of palliative care professionals. The idea of a virtual hospice - an idea conceived by then-nursing student Anita Stern, was brought to fruition by this group, under the leadership of Dr. Harvey Chochinov. The Honourable Sharon Carstairs, Minister with Special Responsibility for Palliative Care at the time, negotiated financial support from Western Economic Diversification and the Doer Government in Manitoba to make www.virtualhospice.ca and www.portailpalliatif.ca realities. Dr. Mike Harlos led content development and became the Clinical Lead, a position he held until his retirement. The quality and practicality of Mike's content are the foundation for our success and growth. The clinical team has grown from a physician and a nurse to a full interdisciplinary team that hails from across Canada. Josette Berard, the first Executive Director who oversaw the development of the original site changed careers in 2007 at which time Shelly Cory, the current Executive Director, took the helm.

Over the last 20 years, we are humbled to have become the world's most trusted, accessed, and comprehensive online portal on advanced illness, palliative and end-of-life care, and grief in the world. We are proud and grateful to have:

- Served the information and support needs of well over 30 million visitors from every country around the world.
- Engaged thousands of people from coast-to-coast to coast to co-design the 12 bilingual platforms and countless products and services we offer.
- Convened an Elders and Knowledge Carriers Circle to provide direction and ensure our work is done in a good way.
- Share the wisdom of hundreds of people from across Canada who have “been there” and the expertise of more than 200 national and international experts.
- Continue to provide trusted products and online services, including training for people working in healthcare, free of charge.
- Developed tailored resources for those considered underserved by the healthcare system including: Indigenous Peoples, immigrants and refugees, people who identify as 2SLGBTQI+ and their allies, families caring for a seriously ill child, adolescents and young adults with advanced illness.
- Served on countless research teams to lend our knowledge translation expertise.
- Founded the Canadian Grief Alliance and advocated for improved access to grief services, public awareness, and research.

We hold space for those who have contributed to our work and have since died. Your legacy lives on in the stories you’ve told and the difference you have made to so many.

And we are very grateful to Manitoba Health, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Health Canada, the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer, Canada InfoWay, Veterans Affairs Canada, Healthcare Excellence Canada, the Winnipeg Foundation, CIRA, and the Thomas Sill Foundation for having the courage and commitment to palliative care to invest in the vision.

We are indebted to our Board of Directors and Chair the Honourable Sharon Carstairs for their unwavering support and to the incredible staff and clinical team over the past 20 years whose professional and personal commitments have enabled us to reach farther, dream bigger, and achieve more than we ever thought imaginable.

And we have only just begun! We look forward to stepping into the next 20 years with you.



Anita Stern, Hon. Sharon Carstairs, Dr. Harvey Chochinov and Mr. Norm Kasian CEO Riverview Health Centre



Simone Stenekes, Dr. Harvey M Chochinov, Hon. Sharon Carstairs and Dr. Mike Harlos

Highlights

Walked alongside groups who have historically been underserved to co-design resources to support them and foster respectful, safe, inclusive care. We are proud to have collaborated with:

- [First Nations, Inuit, and Métis](#)
- People who identify as [2SLGBTQ+](#) and their allies

- [Immigrants and refugees](#)
- [Young adults with life-limiting illness](#)
- [Families supporting a seriously ill or dying child](#)
- [People who are grieving](#)

Developed online psychosocial resources to support [kids](#), [youth](#), and [adults](#) who are grieving.

Developed [training for professionals](#) including:

- Social workers
- Physicians
- Nurses
- ICU staff
- LTC staff
- Paramedics

Pioneered the Innovation Challenge at the 2018 International Congress on Palliative Care.

What's New

Grief Chats Q&A

February 12, 2024, Virtual

Join grief specialists Maxxine Rattner (MSW, PhD) and Marney Thompson (MA, RCC) as they host Grief Chats Q&A – a free monthly webinar and Facebook Live event where they will respond to your questions about loss and grief.

Grief Chats Q&A are held at 8:30 pm ET / 5:30 pm PT, on the second Monday of each month.

If you have questions for discussion you would like to submit in advance, please click the link below.

[Submit question](#)

[Register](#)

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KidsGrief Q&A February

February 20, 2024, Virtual

Join children's grief expert Andrea Warnick as she answers your questions.

[Register](#)

VIDEO: What happens as we die

Palliative care expert Dr. Kathryn Mannix demystifies the experience of death in this powerful TedTalk, sharing how a better understanding of what actually happens can reduce fear in the final days, for you and your loved ones.

[Watch video](#)

ARTICLE: “You can’t die here”

This article by Kelli Stajduhar, PhD, et al., published in BMC Palliative Care, explores the barriers to dying-in-place for people who are precariously housed in British Columbia.

[Read more](#)

BLOG: Community insights on providing palliative care to those experiencing homelessness or vulnerable housing

This blog details insights from a recent two-day workshop hosted by Healthcare Excellence Canada and the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer to take a closer look at some of the aspects of traditional palliative care models that lead to disproportionately low access to care for people experiencing homelessness or vulnerable housing, including needs like income security, food, and more personalized, compassionate care.

[Read more](#)

PODCAST: Making space for non-physical suffering

In this episode of About Empathy, Canadian Virtual Hospice team member and educator, Maxxine Rattner, PhD, discusses the challenges in addressing non-physical suffering and the importance of making space within palliative care to do this intrinsically difficult work and approach the work without the expectation of “fixing” a patient’s or family’s suffering.

[Listen to podcast](#)

ARTICLE: *Top Ten Tips Palliative Care Clinicians Should Know About Caring for Family Caregivers*

This article by Allison Applebaum, PhD, et al., published in the Journal of Palliative Oncology, provides practical guidance to assist palliative care clinicians to support family caregivers. It emphasizes that integrating family caregivers into a patient’s health care team, and supporting them in their role, has significant benefits for family caregivers, patients, health care systems, communities, and society.

[Read more \(login required\)](#)

New Report from Alzheimer Society features Piita Irniq

The recently released *Report 2: Many Faces of Dementia in Canada* features a story that Piita Irniq, an Inuk and a residential school survivor, shared in a video with Canadian Virtual Hospice. Piita explains the Inuit’s experience with dementia and shares how he helped bring Inuit culture and food to a southern facility caring for Inuit Elders with dementia.

[Read Piita’s story](#)

[View full report](#)

Want more? In this video series, Piita speaks on Inuit culture, history and igloo life as well as healthcare, and end-of-life.

[View Piita’s video series](#)

Five Advance Care Planning Tools from Compassionate Alberta

Covenant Health's Palliative Institute has developed five tools to improve public awareness of palliative care and advance care planning (ACP) in Alberta.

- [My Wishes Alberta](#) - a workbook helps people identify and share what they value most in their life, health and personal care.
- [Plan Ahead Toolkit](#) - a toolkit to support community organizers in developing public education on ACP.
- [Understanding Palliative Care](#) - an interactive online module about the support palliative care offers.
- [PalliLearn](#) - a public education series to help people support friends and neighbours through sickness, death and grief.
- Resources for facilitators of [Death Cafes](#) - events where people gather to talk openly about death and dying.

[Learn more](#)

A consensus definition of the care provided by hospice societies in BC

The BC Centre for Palliative Care & BC Hospice Palliative Care Association released the results of a two-year effort in which a panel of hospice and palliative care experts, people with lived experience, and community partners reached a consensus on the definition of the care offered by hospice societies in BC.

[Learn more](#)

ARTICLE: *'Total pain': reverence and reconsideration*

This article by educator Maxxine Rattner, PhD, details a need to reconsider the long lasting impact of Dame Cicely Saunders' original conceptualization of 'total pain' and how it has had a lasting impact within the field of palliative care.

[Read more](#)

REPORT: Essential elements for safe and high-quality end-of-life care

On December 12, 2023, the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality of Care released the second edition of the *National Consensus Statement: Essential elements for safe and high-quality end-of-life care* (Consensus Statement). The Consensus Statement describes nine guiding principles that provide a best-practice approach to caring for people approaching the end of their life.

[Read more](#)

ARTICLE: Redefining Palliative Care - A New Consensus-Based Definition

This article by Lukas Radruch, MD, of the Department of Palliative Medicine at the University Hospital Boon in Germany, et al., presents a new definition of palliative care and the research behind it, developed by the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care. This definition focuses on the relief of serious health-related suffering, a concept put forward by the Lancet Commission Global Access to Palliative Care and Pain Relief.

[Read more](#)

Paramedics embed palliative care competencies into new National Competency Framework for Paramedics

The *CSA Z1660:2024 Draft Standard, National Competency Framework for Paramedics*, has been posted for public review. The new framework outlines the features required for competent practice in diverse contexts across Canada, including greater attention on equipping paramedics to provide quality, patient-centered palliative care.

The closing date for public review of the framework is March 19, 2024.

[Learn more](#)

Social Spotlight



Dr John Woodward
@John_woodward1



6 months till I die of brain cancer. As I move into the undignified phase of falling over and spilling food on myself I wish that we could be more supportive of each other instead of hurling abuse which passes as debate. Then the world I am leaving would be a better place.

2:59 PM · 2023-12-17 · **1.4M** Views

Webinar Recordings

Canadian Grief Alliance presents...

Grief and the Holidays Q&A

Dec. 6

SPEAKERS:

- Marney Thompson, MA**
Victoria Hospice Bereavement Services
- Maxxine Rattner, PhD, RSW**
Canadian Grief Alliance
- Chris MacKinnon, PhD**
Monkland Psychology

Logos: CANADIAN VirtualHospice, Canadian Grief Alliance, Health Canada, Santé Canada, virtualhospice.ca

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The recording of the Canadian Grief Alliance’s holiday webinar is now available. Grief specialists Maxxine Rattner (MSW, RSW), Marney Thompson (MA, RCC), and Chris MacKinnon (PhD) hosted this live event on Dec. 6, 2023, and responded to the questions of 125 attendees.

Canadian Grief Alliance presents...

Grief Chats Q&A

Jan. 8

SPEAKERS:

Marney Thompson, MA
Victoria Hospice
Bereavement Services

Maxxine Rattner, PhD, RSW
Canadian Grief Alliance

CANADIAN VirtualHospice

Canadian Grief Alliance

Health Canada Santé Canada

virtualhospice.ca

The recording of the Canadian Grief Alliance's first Grief Chats Q&A is now available. Grief specialists Maxxine Rattner (MSW, RSW) and Marney Thompson (MA, RCC) hosted this live event on Jan. 8, 2024.

Events and Calls for Abstracts

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada: Prairies Virtual Support Group

Virtual

This virtual support group is open to those diagnosed with all types of blood cancer and survivors. This group will be professionally facilitated by a social worker with Cancer Care Manitoba.

Support Group Dates

- February 13, 2024
- March 12, 2024
- April 9, 2024
- June 11, 2024

Register

'Littles' Bereavement Support Group

February 13, 2024, Ontario

Yorktown's Growing With Grief team presents another round of 'Littles' Bereavement Support Group. This is a 6-week indoor program for bereaved children between the ages of 6-9 and takes place in the West End of Toronto. 'Littles' participate in expressive arts and play-based activities to explore grief feelings, build connections, and learn ways to continue their bond with the person in their life who has died.

[Register](#)

Forever Changed: a series of conversation cafes

Series, Ontario

Join Nightingale Centre for Grieving Children, Youth, and Families for a series of conversations about different losses. Attend a free, in-person conversation at the Guelph Public Library East Branch and take an opportunity to talk about the impact that grief has had on your life. Hear from and connect with people who share a similar lived experience and learn where others found support, how they coped, managed, and grew in their grief.

- February 21, 2024 – Child loss
- March 13, 2024 – Young adults living with loss
- April 10, 2024 – Death of a parent

[Register](#)

YACC Chats: Series

Series, Virtual

YACC Chats: Series is similar to the regular YACC Chats, but participants sign up and commit to getting together weekly for eight weeks in order to deepen connections and build on the conversation. These sessions are presented virtually.

YACC Chats: Series – Newly diagnosed

- Group B: Thursdays starting February 22, 9 - 10:30 pm ET
- Group C: Thursdays starting April 4, 2 - 3:30 pm ET

[Register for Newly Diagnosed group](#)

YACC Chats: Series – Advanced & metastatic

- Group B: Tuesdays starting March 5, 2 - 3:30 pm ET
- Group C: Tuesdays starting April 30, 2 - 3:30 pm ET
- Group E: Wednesdays starting March 6, 7 - 8:30 pm ET
- Group F: Wednesdays starting May 1, 7 - 8:30 pm ET

[Register for Advanced & metastatic group](#)

YACC Chats: Series – Survivorship

- Group B: Wednesdays starting March 6, 9 - 10:30 pm ET
- Group C: Wednesdays starting May 1, 9 - 10:30 pm ET
- Group D: Mondays starting January 29, 7 - 8:30 pm ET
- Group E: Mondays starting April 8, 7 - 8:30 pm ET

[Register for Survivorship group](#)

Call for Abstracts: Hospice Palliative Care Ontario 2024 Annual Conference

February 9, 2024, Ontario

The Call for Abstracts is open to receive your submissions for workshop, poster, and oral paper presentations to be presented at the HPCO 2024 Annual Conference. The conference will be held from June 9 to 11, with the theme "Palliative Care, Everywhere".

[Submit abstract](#)

Call for Abstracts: Palliative Manitoba 2024 Annual Provincial Palliative Care Conference

February 16, 2024, Manitoba

The Call for Abstracts is open to receive your submissions to be presented at Palliative Manitoba's 2024 Annual Provincial Palliative Care Conference. The conference will be held from September 19 to 20, with the theme "Changing the Conversation".

[Submit abstract](#)

Call for Abstracts: McGill International Palliative Care Congress

February 28, 2024, Quebec

The Call for Abstracts is open to receive your submissions for workshops, panels, proffered papers or posters to be presented at the 24th edition of the Congress in Montreal October 15 to 18.

[Submit abstract](#)

Compassionate Care 2024 Workshops

Series, Virtual

Presented by the Pregnancy and Infant Loss Network, the following two virtual workshops are open for registration.

[Emergency Department Focused Workshop](#) - February 28, 2024

[PAIL Network Hosted Compassionate Care Workshop](#) - April 12, 2024

Ontario Summer Grief Camps

Several organizations are offering youth grief camps this year! Check out the below options.

- Toronto area: <https://camperintoronto.com/attend-camp/>
- Hamilton area - Camp Keaton: <https://kemphospice.org/services/camp-keaton/>
- Peterborough and region - Camp Kerry: <https://lumarasociety.org/registration-open-for-camp-kerry-ontario/>
- Barrie area: <https://www.grievingchildren.com/programs/summer-programs/>
- Ennismore area - Camp Skein: <https://www.campmapleleaf.ca/jacob-island-programs-ontario/#skein>

Exploring Green Care Farms – An innovation in dementia care

March 7, 2024

Join the Palliative Approach in LTC Community of Practice on March 7, 2024 from 11 am - 12 pm ET for a presentation on Green Care Farms. This innovative care concept, widely used in the Netherlands, offers a homelike environment for people with dementia, promoting person-centered care,

autonomy, and a higher quality of living and dying. Discover how these farms can be a valuable alternative to traditional nursing homes, fostering engagement and social interaction.

[Register](#)

Advanced Cancer Virtual Support Group

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of Canada has launched a new Advanced Cancer Virtual Support Group for patients with a non-curative blood cancer diagnosis. The group will be professionally facilitated, running six consecutive Wednesdays – from March 6 to April 10, 2024 at 5 pm ET.

This free online support group features:

- Professional facilitation by a clinical counselor specializing in advanced cancer
- Education topics uniquely focused on coping with advanced cancer
- A safe space for individuals to connect, learn and share the challenges they face
- Address the challenges encountered in rural healthcare settings
- Privacy ensured: Exclusively for individuals with advanced cancer

[Refer a patient](#)

Annual Palliative Outcome Scale Training Days

May 1 to 2, 2024, Hybrid

Hosted by the Cicely Saunders Institute at King's College London and the Hull York Medical School, this hybrid event offers the opportunity to learn about the POS family of measures, discover new developments in palliative care outcomes measurement, and collaborate with like-minded clinicians and researchers from around the world.

[Register](#)

Supportive Care Update Conference

May 9, 2024, Virtual

This virtual event, hosted by the Department of Supportive Care at the University Health Network, will highlight 10 new studies/topics from the last 12

months through 40-minute virtual lectures. All updates will be education-focused, evidence-based, clinically applied, and relevant to those working and learning within supportive care.

[Register](#)

2024 BON Conference

Virtual

The 2024 portion of the BON conference will take place virtually over 3 days: January 18, April 25, and June 13, 2024. Learn more or register on the BON website. The conference theme is *Change, Transition, and Transformation: Healing after Loss*.

[Register](#)

We'd love to hear from you!

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