

PROJECT FACT SHEET

Building a New Model of Post-Treatment Care for Lung Cancer Patients and Their Families

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Lorna Butler and Murali Rajaraman are looking for efficient ways to bring superior care to lung cancer patients who have undergone treatment.

Their recent pilot study lays the groundwork for a larger randomized study – one that may change the way that lung cancer patients receive post-treatment care.

“The goal is to compare the effectiveness and cost of having a nurse lead the post-treatment care of lung-cancer patients and their families,” explains Dr. Butler, who was with the faculty at Dalhousie University’s School of Nursing.

“By extension,” she notes, “this study looks at how nurses can take a leading role, and evaluates a nurse-led model against the standard approach, which is through a cancer clinic follow up.”

The pilot study involved 12 post-treatment lung care patients and their families who were receiving care at the Queen Elizabeth II Health Sciences Centre Cancer Clinic in Halifax. One group received care lead by a nurse while a control group went to the cancer clinic. The researchers found that Canadians could support a nurse-led model, although additional training would have to take place.

“The study tested and evaluated a number of processes and tools that will be used in the larger study, as well as helped us to determine which areas of health care the study should measure to compare methods of follow up care,” says Dr. Rajaraman, a radiation oncologist with Capital Health Cancer Care and a member of the Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine.

In addition, the research team found ways to measure the health-related quality of life of the patient and the psychosocial distress experienced by the patient and family. Of concern were also the levels of satisfaction experienced by care providers, the patient, and the family. Finally, the study determined methods of measuring the costs associated with post-treatment care – both direct costs to the health care system and the indirect costs to the patient.

“The pilot test has laid a strong foundation for further research in this area,” says Dr. Butler. “There is a need to expand the patient-eligibility criteria for this study and look closely at the method of nurse-led follow-up. Also, if we are going to have nurses conducting the post-treatment care we also have to investigate the best ways of training them.”

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