



MAY 15 2020

Our File: 20-426

Robert Bick  
Deb Maskens  
Co-founders, CanCertainty Coalition  
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Dear Robert and Deb:

Thank you for your April 14, 2020, letter regarding the request for immediate policy action and flexibility for cancer patients during COVID-19. I appreciate that you have taken the time to provide me with your recommendations regarding this important health care matter.

As you are aware, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (SCA) has implemented a number of measures to change treatment regimens when possible to ensure patient safety and keep as many people as possible out of hospitals and cancer centres to avoid unnecessary risk of infection from viruses such as COVID-19. Some of these measures include but are not limited to:

- Practicing social distancing and taking all recommended precautionary measures to minimize risk of contracting or spreading the Coronavirus COVID-19. Cancer patients are receiving their appointments virtually or by phone, if possible. Only patients needing to attend in-person will do so;
- Patients are being offered oral treatment options rather than an intravenous treatment option or dose adjustments in clinically appropriate cases in order to reduce exposure within hospitals or cancer centres;
- The Saskatoon Cancer Centre (SCC) is reducing phlebotomy services and redirecting patients to community labs for blood work requirements. In special circumstances, such as for immune-compromised transplant patients, the blood draw will be completed at the cancer centre in the privacy of an exam room;
- To protect all vulnerable patients and limit the risk of exposure for patients and staff, patients attending follow-up appointments or receiving treatment with the cancer centre will be required to attend by themselves. Patients who require a support person to accompany them to subsequent appointments due to medical or legal requirements will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis;

- Additionally, since fever is a common symptom in cancer patients receiving chemotherapy, the SCA is issuing chemo cards for patients who present at an emergency department to ensure they are easily and immediately identified. This card also signals the need for these patients to be isolated, when possible, to mitigate risk of infection from viruses such as COVID-19; and
- Screening is taking place for any person who enters the cancer clinics. It should also be noted that some follow-up appointments may be rescheduled; however those patients will be contacted in advance by the SCA.

All of the noted measures are in place to ensure cancer patients in Saskatchewan continue to receive the best possible care during the new environment that COVID-19 has presented.

In your letter, you also recommended flexibility in treatment protocols and provincial reimbursement programs during and immediately following this time of change. At this time, the SCA is reviewing treatment plans for patients on a case-by-case basis, which includes the assessment of immunotherapy options. It should also be highlighted that the SCA Oncology Drug Formulary strictly follows only those drugs that have been recommended by the pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review (pCODR), negotiated nationally through the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA), and approved by the SCA's Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee.

Please accept my appreciation for your correspondence and recommendations. The Ministry of Health and SCA continue to review all of our programs and work on priority initiatives to improve the overall health and well-being of Saskatchewan residents on an on-going basis.

Sincerely,



Jim Reiter  
Minister of Health

cc: Dr. Jon Tonita, President and CEO, Saskatchewan Cancer Agency