

From: [Pat Pilgrim](#)
To: [Pam Elliott; Sharon Smith; Heather Predham;](#)
Subject: FW:
Date: May-05-08 12:49:50 PM
Attachments: [Clarifying approach to hormone receptor test Pat Sharon Heather April 28 \[1\].doc](#)
[Draft Patient Apology Letter Pat Sharon Heather April 28\[1\].doc](#)
[Hormonal Information\[1\].doc](#)

Just to clear up any confusion .. and there is some ... here is the information prepared to go to the patients....before any changes recommended by Robert Thompson. Pat

Patricia Pilgrim
 Chief Operating Officer
 Cancer Care, Quality and Risk Management
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 Prince Philip Drive
 St. John's, NL A1B 3V6

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 E-mail - Pat.Pilgrim@easternhealth.ca

-----Original Message-----

From: Wayne Miller [<mailto:wayne.miller@nf.sympatico.ca>]
 Sent: Monday, April 28, 2008 6:29 PM
 To: Pat Pilgrim
 Subject:

Here are the three files.

Office of the President and Chief Executive Officer
Eastern Health
Executive Office
Waterford Bridge Road
St. John's, NL
Canada A1E 4J8
T: 709-777-1330
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www.easternhealth.ca

DATE

Address Line
Address Line
Address Line
Address Line

Dear (Name):

As the interim president and CEO of Eastern Health, I feel it necessary to contact you at this time on behalf of Eastern Health. Since the Commission of Inquiry began, we have become more aware of the negative impact our decisions have had on you and your family. This is not acceptable to us. We get calls everyday from patients and families looking for more information and telling us their concerns. We know that every patient deserves to receive the highest standard of care possible from Eastern Health. We wish to say to you that we are sorry that we, as a health care organization did not provide that high quality patient care in relation to the ER/PR issue that we expect of ourselves and that you deserve. We deeply regret the stress, the pain, and the anxiety felt by you and your families because of this issue.

To our knowledge, the decision to go back eight years to retest patient tissue samples for ER/PR had never been done before in Canada. It was a massive undertaking, and its challenges are still being felt. This action was launched without hesitation and for one reason only: to identify patients who might be candidates for additional drug therapies such as tamoxifen.

We have learned many things throughout this process. There are many things we would have done differently if we had known then what we know today. in terms of the size and complexity of the task that actually faced us.

We have heard your views on how we communicated with you and the public. Again, there are lessons we have learned. But if there is one thing we want you to know, it is this: those responsible for your care, tried to make the best decisions they knew how to make at the time. Their main concern was to present you with the most accurate and complete picture possible, once they knew it themselves.

To help explain this and give you a better understanding of the events as they unfolded, we have included an information sheet that outlines how we addressed the issues surrounding the hormone receptor retesting and what measures we have taken to improve the care we provide. We have also included some background information on hormone receptor testing and tamoxifen in particular.

We are available to talk to you or your family in person or by telephone to provide further information. If you are unsure of your results or would like to talk about your results please give us a call. In addition, we would welcome any suggestions you might have for further follow-up. If you wish to speak with us, please call 1-866-445-4548 or if you wish to communicate with me personally please email: ceo@easternhealth.ca.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Sincerely,

LOUISE JONES

Interim President & Chief Executive Officer

DRAFT

Clarifying our approach to the hormone receptor test issue

Our Review of hormone receptor tests

Doctors and staff at Eastern Health and the other regional health authorities work hard everyday to provide the best patient care possible. This is why we took the unprecedented step of retesting estrogen and progesterone receptor (ER/PR) tests. We wanted to ensure that the tests originally done were correct and that our patients were offered the best treatment options available. We believed that if any patient could benefit from retesting, this needed to be done. Our review involved:

1. Identifying patients whose samples required retesting.
2. Obtaining the breast tissue samples that had originally been tested.
3. Reviewing those samples and choosing the most appropriate for retesting.
4. Sending the samples chosen to the Pathology Laboratory, Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto for retesting.
5. If the retest results were returned and did not change, senior nursing staff contacted patients directly by telephone to give them the results.
6. If the retest results were returned and changed, a panel of medical experts reviewed them and identified further treatment options if necessary. The recommendations of this review were sent to the patient's doctor in writing.

Eastern Health worked with Western Health, Central Health and Labrador-Grenfell Health to retest patients and to inform them of the results of this process.

Communications with patients

Our Nursing staff and physicians have personally spoken to many of the patients affected by this retesting since July 2005. We also communicated with many other doctors who have requested clarification and assistance in supporting their patients.

Problems identified with the process Eastern Health used

Over the past two years, we discovered that some patients' samples were not initially identified and therefore not sent for retesting. This caused us grave concern as we became aware of each situation and we have investigated why this happened. Problems with the process were mainly related to difficulties in identifying all patients affected due to the limitations within our computerized information systems.

All health authorities have participated in a full review of our process coordinated by the Department of Health and Community Services. Through this review process we have identified other problems not previously identified. These mainly relate to the challenge of coordinating this process between four health authorities and hundreds of physicians.

What we have learned

As a result of what we have learned we have made improvements in our pathology laboratory to ensure the public is provided with a quality service. We have made recommendations to government with respect to how to improve our database and decision support systems and we continue to work with government toward implementation of these long-term solutions. We have identified improvements that we would make if we were faced with a similar review in the future. We look forward to all recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry.

Improvements to our Laboratory**Eastern Health has made the following improvements:**

- Eastern Health had external experts visit our pathology laboratory to review the quality of the work done there. These experts provided recommendations for improvement. We have implemented or are in the process of implementing all recommendations from these external reviews.
- We have designated the part of the lab that performs the ER/PR test as a separate division with three (3) designated technologists, a lab medical director, and other technical staff.
- Our technologists and pathologists in this division have received additional specialized training in immunohistochemistry.
- We have established a Quality Management Program in this new division.
- We have consolidated all breast cases for examination and reporting to a designated group of pathologists.
- We are working with our provincial government to implement a provincial accreditation program for all laboratories in the province. This program will involve adopting a set of provincial standards and reviewing all laboratories in the province to ensure standards are met.
- We participated in a newly developed national accreditation process for laboratories through the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation program; a recognized program through which national standards are set and institutions compare their services against these standards. We are adopting recommendations made through this review.

Through all of this, Eastern Health is committed to ensuring we offer our patients the best possible service.

Clarifying our approach to the hormone receptor test issue

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