

**Dr. Robert Williams**

**From:** George Tilley  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 20, 2005 9:29 AM  
**To:** Alice Collins (alicec@mun.ca); Barb Roebotham (broeboth@morgan.ucs.mun.ca); Charlotte Fitzpatrick (cfitzptrck@hotmail.com); David Duffett (Business Fax); David Hiscock (davidh@personainternet.com); Ed Drover (Ed.Drover@freedom55financial.com); Ed Walsh (epwalsh@nf.sympatico.ca); Frank Davis (fdavis@nfd.net); Hubert McGrath (h.r.mcgrath@nf.sympatico.ca); Joan Dawe (jddawe@nf.sympatico.ca); Lewis Cole (pearl.lew@nf.sympatico.ca); Majorie Gibbons (majorie.gibbons@nf.sympatico.ca); Paul Colbert (pcolbert63@hotmail.com); Primrose Bishop (primrose.bishop@nf.sympatico.ca); Regina Bailey (r.bailey@superweb.ca); Rowena Bryans (rbryans@persona.ca); William Boyd (wboyd@wob.nf.ca)  
**Subject:** FW: On CBC Website - and this aired on The National last night - Unreliable test gives lessons to all labs - Oct. 19

Trustees;

I am attaching a transcript of the item on the CBC National newscast last night pertaining to our laboratory situation. Aside from what we are doing locally, there is a growing awareness that this is a national issue which is referenced in this story. I do not know who Dr. Hewlett is, who was interviewed.

We did talk to the Canadian Patient Safety Institute yesterday to discuss who could appropriately take the lead to ensure that standards are developed in this area. They wanted some time to reflect on it. We consulted with Health Canada but unless it is associated with an equipment failure they don't get involved. I also talked to one of my CEO colleagues in Toronto, who is an oncologist, and his opinion is that this is a very "grey test". He has given us the names of a couple of breast cancer specialists in the country to get their opinion as to how this can be followed up on. We will also be writing the Canadian Association of Pathologists to suggest their involvement.

In the meantime, since we are having limited success in getting all of our key messages covered by the media, this weekend we will be taking our newsprint ads to review where we are with this. As well, today, we will start calling all patients who are being retested to advise them of when their results can be expected. We are hoping we can conclude that next week. I have talked to the CEO of Mount Siani Hospital, which is doing the retesting for us, to see if there is any possible way they can move the retests any faster.

George

George Tilley  
 President/Chief Executive Officer  
 Eastern Health  
 c/o Corporate Office  
 Waterford Bridge Rd.  
 A1E 4J8  
 Tel: 709-777-1330  
 Fax: 709-777-1302

10/20/2005

*Scandit Ph*  
*Bryan Hewlett*  
*Dicks*  
*Mulchm. dimth*

**From:** Deborah Thomas-Pennell  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 20, 2005 8:28 AM  
**To:** Alice Kennedy; Arlene Cook (acock@peninsulas.ca); Beverley Clarke; Brenda Yetman (E-mail); Dianne Clements (E-mail); Dianne Smith; Doris Murphy (E-mail); Dr. Robert Williams; Elizabeth Strange-Hollett; Fay Matthews; George Butt; George Tilley; Joyce Penney; Kathryn Atkin (katkin@sjnrb.nf.ca); Louise Jones; Mary Haynes (E-mail); Michele Keats (MicheleKeats@hcse.ca); Pat Colish-Snow; Patricia Pilgrim; Paula Dillon; Steve Dodge; Susan Bonnell; Wayne Miller  
**Cc:** Diane Hart; jennifer.deon@easternhealth.ca; Elizabeth Strange-Hollett; Heather Predham; Nancy Parsons  
**Subject:** On CBC Website - and this aired on The National last night - Unreliable test gives lessons to all labs - Oct. 19

### **Unreliable tests gives lesson to all labs**

Last updated Oct 20 2005 07:20 AM NDT  
CBC News

Tissue samples from some breast cancer survivors in Newfoundland and Labrador are being retested after a lab problem that could be repeated across the country, a medical technology expert warns.

The hormone receptor test shows if cancer cells respond to hormones. If the results are positive, patients are usually treated with the hormone therapy tamoxifen.

Reliability problems with the test in St. John's were discovered when a patient fell ill despite a negative test result, and the tissue later tested positive.

- FROM OCT. 14, 2005: Flawed cancer tests raise patients' concerns

Zita White of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, and hundreds of other women are waiting to find out if they received the correct treatment. People with a positive test result are usually treated with tamoxifen.

"If I had tested positive, I would have been given the drug tamoxifen, which would have greatly lowered my chance for recurrence," said White, who as far as she knows, is cancer-free. Officials at the St. John's lab acknowledged the problem, but they don't yet know what went wrong.

"There's 40 steps in that process," said Bob Williams, a vice-president at the Eastern Health regional authority. "Any problem in any one step can cause a problem with the testing results."

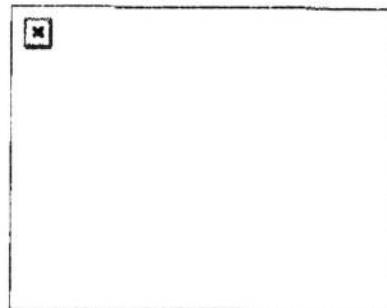
Problems with the test are not new. The medical literature shows test results have varied widely between labs in Europe. Williams said it prompted the lab to take another look at their testing procedure at the health authority.

Canada lacks a national standard body for the tests, said Dr. Brian Hewlitt, an expert in medical technology. He said labs across the country should take a look at what they're doing to make sure they are getting it right. "I think the laboratories performing the testing are duty-bound to do some peer comparison, to take their material and have it tested in another centre and compare the results," said Hewlitt.

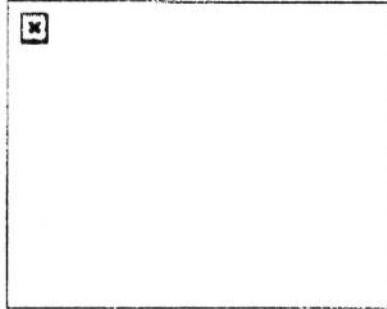
"On the basis of that, then you may or may not wish to become severely worried."

Breast cancer patients in Newfoundland are scrambling for answers.

"There is absolutely no doubt that there is a group of women out there that didn't get proper treatment, and that could have very dire consequences," said Peter



Zita White



Dr. Brian Hewlitt

Dawe, director of the Newfoundland and Labrador chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society.

Deborah Thomas-Pennell  
Media Relations Officer  
Direct 777-1339/1338  
Cell 685-7697  
Email: [deborah.thomas@easternhealth.ca](mailto:deborah.thomas@easternhealth.ca)

"In a perfect world, every dog would have a home and every home would have a dog."