



**Eastern  
Health**

**FAX TRANSMISSION**

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To: Dr. Don Cook  
Dr. Nash Denic

Date: April 27, 2006

Pages: 3, including this cover sheet.

From: Dr. Robert Williams  
Vice President, Quality, Diagnostic and Medical Services

RE: Letter to Peter Dawe

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Don, Nash,

For your review and comments.

Thanks,  
Bob

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DRAFT

April 27, 2006

Mr. Peter Dawe  
Executive Director  
Canadian Cancer Society  
Newfoundland Division  
ADDRESS

Dear Peter:

I am writing in follow up to discussions we've had in the past and our most recent discussion of today's date.

I certainly strongly support your endeavours to get the issue of hormone receptor testing on the national agenda with a view to improving the quality and reproducibility of these tests across the country. The results of these tests are being relied on as important factors in determining treatment regimes for breast cancer patients.

I've attached a dossier of the literature that we have reviewed here in Eastern Health with respect to methodologies and outcomes with respect to ER/PR marker testing. As you can see from other jurisdictions, the accuracy/reproducibility/reliability has been called into question. It would seem reasonable that there be some kind of mechanism put in place nationally to monitor labs from a quality perspective who provide these testing regimes. I know there has been discussion within the ranks of the Canadian Association of Pathologists with respect to this matter, and further follow up, I hope, will take place at their national meetings which are coming up this summer. They are a national voluntary organization who are not in the position to mount any service with respect to quality review of these testing procedures, but I am sure would be willing to participate in discussions with a view to furthering the quality agenda in this respect.

I would also hope that discussions could take place in the Oncology community on this issue, as Oncologists need reliable testing to offer optimal treatment to patients with breast cancer. Also, the literature indicates that there are variable cut-off points with respect to when hormonal therapy will be offered depending on the results of ER and PR testing. I think this is another issue that needs national discussion to achieve consensus.

Any efforts your national association could offer as you move forward with a national cancer strategy to encompass enhancing quality in this important area should be pursued.

As I advised you, our two consultants have revisited the Province to review our efforts here, and once we receive their reports, we will be making a decision concerning reinstating testing within the Laboratory services here in St. John's. Before we reinstate testing, we will be doing an update and briefing session, and I would like to extend to you an opportunity to be involved in that process.

Again, thank you for your interest to date. You can be assured of Eastern Health's support in any further attempts you make in moving the hormone receptor testing forward in terms of quality and as part of any national cancer strategy for our country.

Yours sincerely,

**R.J. WILLIAMS, M.D., M.P.H.**  
Vice President, Quality, Diagnostic and Medical Services

/dd

Enclosure