

A Message from PCCN – Toronto

Dear Fellow Prostate Cancer Survivors,

We trust you and your loved ones have all been keeping well. It has been a very difficult period since mid-March this year when COVID-19 was confirmed as a pandemic and protective measures were taken by governments in our cities, provinces, country and countries around the world. These measures, though restrictive, were necessary to control the spread of the virus.

As September is Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, we at PCCN -Toronto thought we would give you an update on what is happening with our organization.

At PCCN - Toronto, the main impact of COVID-19 was on the Peer Support Group meetings and Awareness Night presentations. As there was an outbreak in early March at the Valleyview Residence, we were advised that our in-person meetings had to be cancelled. Subsequently Toronto's health authorities banned public meetings because of COVID-19. As the COVID pandemic did not seem likely to end soon, we were left looking for alternative ways to provide support to our existing members as well as new Prostate Cancer Patients. After a bit of initial testing, we rolled out online Peer Support Group Meetings on the ZOOM platform in April. By the time you receive this message, we will have conducted our eleventh ZOOM Peer Support Group meeting on the 15th of September. As we are all novices at using this medium, it has been an ongoing effort to fine tune the meetings to ensure that everyone has a positive experience. We would like to thank our members who attend the ZOOM meetings regularly as well as the new attendees who have joined us so far. We know that some members are avoiding the ZOOM meetings because of concerns about security and "Zoom Bombing". We would like to assure you that we take all necessary precautions to make sure that our meetings are safe and secure for our members. If you change your mind and would like to try out a ZOOM meeting, we would be happy to see you at one.

The Toronto Botanical Gardens also shut down because of the ban on assembly of persons in public. As a result our Awareness Night presentations have also been moved to the ZOOM platform. The May 2020 session was conducted by Nelly Faghini of Pelvic Health Solutions. She spoke about "Benefits of Pelvic Floor Physiotherapy" after treatments for Prostate Cancer. The video of Nelly's presentation is available on our website at (<https://tinyurl.com/y2cn5bz9>). Our July 2020 speaker was Dr. Alejandro Berlin, a Radiation Oncologist at Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. He spoke about The Evolving Roles of Brachytherapy for Prostate Cancer. The video of Dr. Berlin's presentation will be uploaded to our website soon. The 30th September 2020 Awareness Night presentation will be by Dr. Jack Barkin of University Urology Associates. Dr. Barkin will speak about High Intensity Focused Ultrasound (HIFU) treatments and MRI Fusion Biopsy techniques.

As most of you know, there was a major development in the Canadian prostate cancer scene earlier this year. On the 1st of February 2020, Prostate Cancer Canada (PCC) merged with the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS). The goal of the merger was to reduce duplication in fundraising efforts and to make sure donations go further in helping patients with prostate cancer. The CCS/PCC union hopes to improve timely access to new and publicly funded diagnosis, treatment and care. Providing better access to the highest quality prostate cancer information is another goal for CCS as well as making it easier for all Canadians to talk about Prostate Cancer.

The main impact of the CCS/PCC merger was felt by the various prostate cancer support groups around the country. When PCC existed, all the national groups that were part of the Prostate Cancer Canada Network (PCCN) were supplied with printed educational materials, event insurance etc. CCS's main function is fundraising for cancer treatments and research. CCS does not provide support for groups other than providing training for support group facilitators. CCS has promised to hold an

online townhall meeting in the near future for all the PCCN group leaders to let everyone know what the CCS role in prostate cancer support will be going forward.

We have an exciting announcement to make regarding a new public identity for PCCN-Toronto. After the CCS/PCC merger, CCS informed all groups that they would not be allowed to use the “Blue Striped Tie” logo as that was previously owned by PCC and now owned by CCS as a result of the merger. CCS will allow groups to use the PCCN name. However, as PCC no longer exists, the PCCN name is meaningless. As a result of this we have had discussions on a new name for our group as well as a new logo. We have decided to use the name “**Prostate Cancer Support – Toronto**”. We have also identified a logo that we will be using for our group. Once the artwork is finalized, you will start seeing our new name and logo on our communications and our online presence. Our website and email addresses will also change. We are in the process of obtaining a new “domain name” to reflect our group’s new name. Rest assured, we will give you the link for the new website and our new email address as soon as that is finalized. We will try to make sure that the current website address will resolve to the new one so that if you do use it, you will automatically be redirected to the new website. Our support phone line (416-932-8820) will remain the same and continues to be available to anyone who would like to speak with one of our volunteers.

Another important outcome of the CCS/PCC merger has been a new relationship between Prostate Cancer Support groups in Ontario. Late in 2019 leaders of a few groups in the GTA decided to meet informally. The idea was to see how groups could work together to exchange ideas, learn from each other and find areas for cooperation. At the initial meeting we found that such meetings would benefit all of us. We decided to contact other group leaders in Ontario and invite them to our meetings. Because of COVID-19 restrictions these meetings were held on the ZOOM online platform. So far we have found these meetings to be very useful. Men are now being invited to attend specialist presentations by groups other than their own which opens up more opportunities to learn about Prostate Cancer from experts in other regions. We also found that some groups in areas outside the major towns and cities had to disband for various reasons. We are hoping that men in these areas who need support during their Prostate Cancer journey can get help by attending ZOOM support meetings held by groups in other towns and cities. This is one very good example of the many advantages of various groups working together to further our common cause. We are planning to set up an online “Notice Board” that would list the upcoming online meetings for various groups so that any Prostate Cancer patients can go there and decide if they would like to attend online events conducted by other groups in the province.

We would like to wish all of you continued good health and we look forward to seeing you at our ZOOM Peer Support meetings as well as the ZOOM Awareness Night presentations.

Keith Braganza – Co-Chair
On behalf of the Board of Directors (PCCN – Toronto)