

Building relationships to unlock a community-driven research collaboration for redressing cancer-related inequities in Vancouver's urban core: Preliminary learnings

Authors: Leah K. Lambert^{1,2}, Kelli Stajduhar^{3,4}, Scott Beck¹, Nancy Lipsky^{2,5}, Jagbir Kaur¹, Emily Lonsdale¹, Annette J. Browne^{2,5}

Affiliations: ¹BC Cancer; ²School of Nursing, University of British Columbia; ³Canada Research Chair (Tier 1) in Palliative Approaches to Care in Aging and Community Health; ⁴School of Nursing and Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health, University of Victoria; ⁵Equip Health Care, University of British Columbia

The Project Team would like to acknowledge that our work is primarily carried out on the unceded, ancestral, and continually occupied territories of the x^wməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) people. We extend our respect and gratitude to the Indigenous Peoples on whose traditional territories we, and our partners and collaborators work.

Background: Vancouver, British Columbia includes some of the most concentrated areas of poverty in the Global North. People impacted by health and social inequities shaped by poverty, housing insecurity, racism, gender-based discrimination including transphobia, colonial violence, ableism, mental health and substance use stigma, and other forms of discrimination, experience *alarming disparities across the cancer control continuum*, including:

- Being diagnosed with preventable cancers at rates that surpass the general population;
- Dying of cancers that are generally curable;
- Being diagnosed with advanced-stage disease for screening-detectable cancers;
- Experiencing poor symptom management;
- Receiving insufficient palliative and/or end-of-life care (1-2)

BEYOND JUST EDUCATION to STRUCTURAL CHANGE



The goal of this authentic team-building project is to establish a community-engaged, collaborative research team positioned to conceptualize, and later conduct, research to redress cancer-related health inequities.



Objectives:

- 1) **Build authentic partnerships** with people with lived experience of inequities, community-based primary care and social service organizations, and service providers.
- 2) **Co-host a series of engagement sessions** where together we will discuss what is important with regards to accessing and receiving cancer-related services and care, and explore priority issues of concern and research ideas.
- 3) **Co-create a set of research priorities** with the community-based partners.
- 4) **Co-design a research proposal** aimed at investigating recommendations and solutions for promoting equity in cancer care and improving disparities in cancer outcomes in BC.

Preliminary Learnings:

To date, we have met with over 70 people who provide and/or access services in the Vancouver urban core. These dialogues furthered understanding of:

- How cancer care is experienced in community.
- How the ongoing stigmatization of substance use and the toxic drug public health crisis continue to impact people providing care and those coming for care.
- How to build on prior community engagement to collaboratively develop respectful and trauma- and violence-informed approaches to working together.
- How to foster meaningful opportunities for community partners to provide guidance and collaboratively determine priorities for cancer care research.

Process: We are using an integrated knowledge translation approach to authentic team-building and issue identification that is informed by participatory action research methodology and a social determinants of health perspective.

Through this project, we aim to develop long-term partnerships to meaningfully redress inequities across the cancer care continuum.

Funding: This research is funded by a Health Equity Research Grant of the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS grant #707675)

References: 1. Stajduhar K, Mollison A, Giesbrecht M, et al. "Just too busy living in the moment and surviving": Barriers to accessing health care for structurally vulnerable populations at end-of-life. BMC Palliative Care. 2019;18(11): 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12904-019-0396-7>; 2. Reimer-Kirkham, S., Stajduhar, K., Pauly, B., Giesbrecht, M., Mollison, A., McNeil, R., & Wallace, B. (2016). Death is a social justice issue: Perspectives on equity-informed palliative care. Adv Nurs Sci. 2016; 39(4): 293-307. DOI: 10.1097/ANS.0000000000000146

Acknowledgements: We gratefully acknowledge community members who shared their experiences and expertise in development of this project, including partnerships through the Downtown Community Health Centre & Kílala Lelum Urban Indigenous Healing Co-Operative.