



The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists of Canada

La Société des gynécologues oncologues du Canada

August 5, 2008

**GOC Position Statement
Regarding the Resignation of Three Gynecologic Oncologists
in Newfoundland and Labrador**

The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists of Canada (GOC) is a multi-disciplinary National Specialty Society that represents all gynecologic oncologists in Canada. Our mission is to improve the care of women with gynecologic cancers by exemplary standards of practice, advocacy for appropriate resources and promotion of research leading to new discoveries to improve care.

GOC fully supports the position taken by the three gynecologic oncologists from Newfoundland and Labrador who have resigned from their positions effective October 7, 2008 to protest the lack of progress in their negotiations with the Newfoundland and Labrador Ministry of Health. As part of the negotiations, these three gynecologic oncologists produced a working document outlining the deficiencies in gynecologic cancer care available to women in Newfoundland and Labrador. They have in that document recommended the need for additional resources including appropriate work and office space, secretarial and nursing support, additional operating room time and equipment, adequate infrastructure to allow their patients to enter clinical trials, and resources to provide new and innovative procedures such as operative laparoscopy and intraperitoneal chemotherapy which are quickly becoming the standard of care in all developed countries. The three gynecologic oncologists in Newfoundland and Labrador have thus made a considerable and legitimate effort to inform and educate the Ministry of Health about the pivotal issues.

We wish to remind the Minister of Health that for many years Newfoundland and Labrador had only one gynecologic oncologist, a position that was occupied by four different doctors from 1982 to 2003. The opportunity now exists to secure the retention of three extremely well trained and experienced gynecologic oncologists, committed to achieving optimal circumstances for women under their care and proved a stable resource. It is therefore important for the government to work with them to establish the necessary resources to achieve optimal cancer care for women in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly since women in that province have among the highest incidence and mortality rates in Canada for gynecologic cancers.

The report submitted by the gynecologic oncologists to the Ministry has emphasized the additional resources needed to provide such optimal care and also raises issues of compensation, including base income and recent implementation of financial incentives to some oncologists to the exclusion of others. While not the central issue leading to their resignations, the Ministry must be aware that retention and recruitment of such sub-specialists many of whose services are unique to this discipline will not be possible unless compensation for gynecologic oncologists in Newfoundland and Labrador is comparable to their peers.

As a National Specialty Society, the GOC offers support to this important negotiating process and is available to provide the Minister with any additional information that may be helpful in bringing the process to a conclusion that will be successful for all parties. We understand that Ministries of Health in all provinces are under considerable pressure, particularly economic, to provide the best health care for all Canadians. Given the recent technological advances in gynecologic oncology which have been proven to improve care, and the serious shortage of gynecologic oncologists in Canada, solutions in this particular discipline are complex. Transferring women from Newfoundland and Labrador is not only not a practical or desirable solution, but is most unnecessary given the committed providers of expert care currently practicing in that jurisdiction. The women of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve nothing less than a bold

and innovative approach to deployment and augmentation of the current human and other resources that exist there to achieve 21st Century care in their home province.

GOC urges the Newfoundland and Labrador Ministry of Health to resolve this crisis by quickly responding to the recommendations of their gynecologic oncologists and to immediately work with them to find a durable solution to this problem.

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Mission Statement of the Society of Gynecologic Oncologists of Canada

The Society of Gynecologic Oncologists of Canada is a nonprofit organization consisting of physicians, nurses, scientists, pharmacists and other allied health care workers specializing in gynecologic oncology cancer care. Its purpose is to improve the care of women with gynecologic cancer, to raise standards of practice in gynecologic oncology and to encourage ongoing research. GOC also seeks to provide information and disseminate knowledge to practitioners, patients and the general public on gynecologic cancer as well as cooperate with other organizations interested in women's health care, oncology, and related fields.

Website: www.g-o-c.org