

Patient Advisor Spotlight: Adam Hardwicke-Brown

Article by Adam Hardwicke-Brown



Adam (left) had the honour of interviewing Verna Yiu, AHS President and CEO, regarding patient/family engagement at a recent Pan-SCN team meeting

My name is Adam Hardwicke-Brown. Two and a half years ago, shortly after I retired, I was diagnosed with tongue cancer. During a 14-hour surgery, half of my tongue was replaced by tissue from my forearm, and two thirds of the lymph nodes in my neck were removed. I then had 30 sessions of radiation, followed by speech and swallowing therapy, and an intensive rehabilitative exercise program which continues today.

I am forever indebted to the team of skilled and dedicated professionals who saved my life and continue to put me back together. In a million years I could never repay them, but wanting to give back, I became a patient advisor volunteer with Alberta Health Services. As a cancer survivor, it seemed a natural fit to volunteer with the Cancer Strategic Clinical Network™ (SCN).

Initially, I attended "Patient Advisor Orientation", where my patient advisor experience and education began. The advice I received from the staff as well as from the

experienced patient advisors was invaluable. I was struck by an enlightening session on the power of storytelling that discussed how personal stories can motivate and inspire change. Next was a meeting with the Cancer SCN staff liaisons, who I can't thank enough as they patiently listened to me and endlessly addressed all of my questions. Now I participate as a patient advisor on the Cancer SCN Core Committee and on some working groups. During these meetings, I feel welcomed and I know that my opinions and perspectives are valued. I have to make sure to pay strict attention because they are always asking me what I think!

I am motivated to continue to build my knowledge and skills in order to be as effective as I can be as a patient advisor. I look forward to the Patient Engagement Reference Group (PERG) weekly e-mails and the quarterly meetings. It's amazing how much there is to learn and how many resources are available to patient advisors. I genuinely enjoy being a patient advisor and truly feel like my voice is being heard, and that I am contributing to shaping health care in Alberta.