

Gyne-oncologists will still take patients, doc says

Last Updated: Thursday, September 18, 2008 | 11:01 AM ET [Comments6](#)[Recommend12](#)
The Canadian Press

One of Newfoundland and Labrador's three gynecological oncologists said Wednesday the doctors would continue to accept patients diagnosed with reproductive cancers, despite their plans to resign in December.

Earlier in the day, the president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association said the cancer specialists had stopped accepting new patients, meaning women with gynecological cancers would have to leave the province to seek treatment. It was news that sparked fear in female cancer patients.

But Dr. Catherine Popadiuk said late Wednesday the doctors will see new patients because no alternative arrangements have been made for women who become diagnosed with cervical, ovarian or uterine cancers.

"We certainly are not turning away any new patients at this time," Popadiuk said. "At this time, as we accept new patients, it's going to be under the understanding that we might not be here to oversee the completion of your care."

The three specialists — Lesa Dawson, Cathy Popadiuk and Patti Power, all based in St. John's — previously set Sept. 16 as the day they would stop accepting new patients. The doctors had said they would resign in October, but have now pushed that deadline back to December.

The physicians have asked for increases in support staff and access to more operating-room time, as well as better remuneration. They say it is unfair their patients receive a lower quality of care than patients elsewhere in Canada.

Popadiuk met with Health Minister Ross Wiseman in an effort to discuss the gynecological oncologists' concerns, but declined to elaborate on whether progress was made. Wiseman wasn't available for comment.

It's estimated that 110 women in the province will be diagnosed with gynecological cancers this year, according to a 2008 report from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

About 1,200 women across the province currently rely upon the gynecological oncologists for a range of services, including treatment and surgery.

Popadiuk and her colleagues have argued that they do not have the resources and supports needed to give their thousands of patients the same standard of care they would receive elsewhere in the country.

The three gynecological oncologists are also paid less than colleagues across Canada, and significantly less than other oncologists in Newfoundland and Labrador.

CBC News has been told that meetings are being scheduled between government officials and the three physicians.

Speaking at a fundraiser for ovarian cancer awareness in early September, Popadiuk told CBC News that there has been progress with officials at Eastern Health, the authority that employs all of them. However, she said, there had been little progress in discussions with top government officials.

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Ottawamom wrote:Posted 2008/09/18

at 5:52 PM ETI wish this story would have half the comments of the ABC stuff. CBC is making the announcements, but this story is getting ignored. What exactly has to happen to make this story count!! Maybe cancer patients should picket Williams every where he goes so Canadians would figure out that he's not the miracle worker he claims - not at all - not one little bit.

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G Pretty wrote:Posted 2008/09/18

at 4:02 PM ETIt this crisis was about Ministerial Testicles, we would have walk -in service on every thoroughfare in St. John's. Its not. Its about cancer and our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, parnters and daughters. In an era where our health care is on life support, our Premiers response is to take on the Nurses Union and treat these three women and their association like enemies of the state. Who voted for that?

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Paradise, NL wrote:Posted 2008/09/18

at 10:41 AM ETIt still baffles me that the docs who got the big winfall 600K salaries are the ones being questioned for botching up breast cancer in the province. And then we see that this province spends the highest per capita on health care, but has the worst record - this government gets top score for putting good money after bad. Throwing 600k per doc to kill breast cancer patients is a good way to throw good money after bad, it seems. Maybe we can congratulate the Williams cabinet for bringing oil revenues in, but they sure don't know how to spend it.

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SALI981 wrote:Posted 2008/09/18

at 10:30 AM ETYour compassion for your patients and your strong ethics have outweighed the political side of things. Much thanks.

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TarraNova wrote:Posted 2008/09/18

at 10:28 AM ETABC= "Any Body Care????"

It's obvious that no one in our government cares about this women's health crisis. THIS is the campaign our Premier should be fighting, not this assinine grudge-match with Ottawa.

Let me see....my health or my vote? Misters Harper and Williams (separated at birth??) - you will never see a vote from me. And I pray to God a Newfoundland and Labrador woman doesn't have to die from this insidious disease waiting for this ABC garbage to end!

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