Unattached Patients Requiring Cancer Screening in London Middlesex

Effective cancer screening through organized population-based programs is critical to reducing the burden of cancer in Ontario. Ontario Health, Cancer Care Ontario (OH-CCO) plans, implements, operates, and evaluates three cancer screening programs: the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP), the Ontario Cervical Cancer Screening Program (OCSP) and the ColonCancerCheck (CCC) Program.

Ensuring that patients with abnormal screening results receive prompt follow-up is one of the key benefits of an organized cancer screening program. Primary care providers (PCPs) have an integral role in ensuring that patients are referred to the appropriate cancer screening test and receive a timely diagnosis in the case of abnormal results as indicated below:

- **CCC:** In the CCC program, PCPs need to request the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) for their patients and the test is then mailed to the eligible patients. PCPs are also responsible for referring patients with abnormal FIT results for follow-up colonoscopy.
- **OCSP:** In the OCSP, PCPs need to refer and, in most cases, perform the HPV test for their patients. PCPs are also responsible for referring patients with abnormal PAP results for follow-up colposcopy.
- **OBSP:** In the average-risk OBSP, patients are able to self-refer themselves to an OBSP site. In the high-risk OBSP, PCPs need to refer patients to a high-risk OBSP site. Following an abnormal screening mammogram, the OBSP site will notify the patient's PCP. PCPs are also responsible for referring patients with abnormal screening mammograms for tissue biopsy both the average-risk and high-risk OBSP.

Patients Unattached to a PCP

Current State – OBSP in the South West Region

Although self-referral is a possibility for patients in the average-risk OBSP, follow-up care by a PCP is required when a screening mammogram is abnormal. Upon identification of abnormal results in unattached patients, the OBSP site will reach out to the South West Regional Cancer Program (SWRCP) office, and the patient will then be connected to our Regional Primary Care Lead, Dr. Paul Gill. Dr. Gill, with the assistance of the SWRCP ensures that the patient receives follow-up care and will communicate with the patient as needed.

At this time, the current model utilized in the South West ensures timely access for unattached patients to breast assessment services. However, the approach creates challenges for care navigation as further follow-up or in-person care needs pose geographical limitations (our Regional Primary Care Lead practices out of Goderich). Furthermore, these patients may require care outside of the OBSP program (i.e. other preventative care, etc.).

Current State – OCSP and CCC

Both the OCSP and CCC require patients to have a PCP to refer them to their screening test and arrange follow-up care if results are abnormal. This current model utilized in the South West poses a barrier for unattached patients to be part of the OCSP and CCC program and receive the appropriate follow-up or in-person care that may be needed close to home.

Proposal

The SWRCP is proposing a partnership for supporting unattached patients within their London Middlesex geographical catchment area that require referral and/or follow-up care of abnormal results in the OBSP, OCSP and CCC program.

Examples of Process:

Unattached OBSP Patients – Requiring Follow-Up of Abnormal Results

Unattached patients living within the London-Middlesex region will self-refer to the OBSP. When the unattached OBSP patients have abnormal screening results, they will be directed to a local OHT based physician designate or nurse practitioner within London Middlesex. This provider would then provide the requisitions and follow-up care needed for that patient.

Unattached OCSP and CCC Patients – Requiring Referral and Follow-up of Abnormal Results

Unattached patients that live within the London Middlesex region that require a referral to the OCSP and/or CCC program will be directed to a local OHT based physician or nurse practitioner designate within the London Middlesex OHT. This designate would then provide a referral for the required screening test, perform the screening test (only applicable for the OCSP) and provide the requisitions and follow-up care needed for that patient in the case of abnormal screening results.

The SWRCP team will work closely with administrative support and clinical leadership at the five OHTs to ensure training and support for the transition of this process. Continual auditing of the process will be in place for the first *12 months*. Ongoing support beyond 12 months will be provided as needed. The Regional Primary Care Lead will also be available as needed to provide clinical support and guidance.

Recruitment

A local physician or nurse practitioner designate will be required for the London Middlesex region.

Please note that an annual stipend will be provided for each recruited local designate who will provide care for unattached patients. Physicians or nurse practitioners interested in becoming a local designate for London Middlesex and supporting unattached patients in the cancer screening programs can contact Jennifer Jones at Jennifer.Jones@lhsc.on.ca.