

**Peter Dawe**

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**From:** Peter Dawe [pdawe@nl.cancer.ca]  
**Sent:** Friday, June 09, 2006 3:22 PM  
**To:** 'Roy West'  
**Subject:** Letter to Eastern Health

Hi Roy,

Here is a draft of the letter to Eastern Health re: Hormone Receptor testing. I know there is no rush on this but I don't want to lose the issue either. We have told the Board we will vet it through them also. Peter

Peter Dawe, Executive Director  
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Questions about cancer? Call the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Information Service 1- 888- 939-3333  
Together Strong

June 8, 2006

Ms. Joan Dawe, Chairperson  
Eastern Health Authority  
Corporate Offices  
306 Waterford Bridge Road  
St. John's, NL A1E 4J8

Re: Hormone Receptor Testing

Dear Ms. Dawe:

I am writing to the Board of Directors of the Health Authority of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Newfoundland and Labrador Division of the Canadian Cancer Society. The purpose of this letter is to address the issue of hormone receptor testing as a part of breast cancer diagnosis.

As the Board of Eastern Health is aware, there have been a number of people retested in the past year for hormone receptors in order to fully diagnose and treat their breast cancer. It is my understanding that this was precipitated by the discovery of inaccurate test results dating back to 1997 and that Eastern Health first became aware of this issue in May 2005.

On behalf of the Board of Director's of the Canadian Cancer Society, I would like to state our sincere appreciation for the cooperation shown by senior staff of Eastern Health in communicating with the Canadian Cancer Society on this issue. In particular, Dr. Bob Williams has been very open and accessible with our Executive Director, Mr. Peter Dawe.

I would also like to convey the following concerns, as formulated at a recent Board of Directors meeting. We believe that any treatment system should be truly 'patient focused'. That is to say that the system must treat the person receiving services with respect and dignity. Open communication and inclusion would be a hallmark of such a system. The Canadian Cancer Society is concerned that open communication with each person involved in the hormone receptor retesting was not handled as well as it could have been. The delay in informing people that their samples would be retested left these people on the outside of an important issue that directly affected them. For some of these people, those with false negatives, it meant they were not included in the correction of a diagnostic process that had major implications for their prognosis.

We realize that the intent was to spare people the anxiety of waiting for the retesting results. However, the health care system has evolved past the time when people are not fully informed of the issues that directly affect their outcomes, regardless of the perceived reaction.

The Canadian Cancer Society is fully supportive of the vital work of Eastern Health, in particular the outstanding dedication and commitment shown by cancer staff. Recent cooperation in the launch of the "Our Living Room" project and the ongoing development of the Provincial Cancer Control Strategy speaks to the productive relationship between the Canadian Cancer Society and Eastern Health. In fact, it is our belief that the relationship has improved with the creation of the Eastern Health Authority.

In this context, the purpose of this letter is to express our concerns about the hormone receptor issue as 'one colleague to another' in our common endeavour to improve the health of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Sincerely,

Dr. Roy West  
President