

George Tilley

From: R Bryans [rbryans@persona.ca]
Sent: October 20, 2005 12:11 PM
To: George Tilley
Subject: Re: On CBC Website - and this aired on The National last night - Unreliable test gives lessons to all labs - Oct. 19

Good Morning George

I did see the CBC newscast last night and there was really no mention of "our side of the story". Your oncologist colleague in Toronto is right in that this is a very grey test but, unfortunately, there are many of these grey tests in Diagnostics. I don't know if there is much more that we can do other than what you and the staff are doing right now. I suspect that we will not be very popular with other testing facilities across the country as this will force all of them to review their practices and procedures as well, and I feel confident that they will come up with the same results that we have upon their own internal review. Guess you can say we've opened a can of worms, but from a patient safety point of view, we couldn't have done anything else. You're doing a good job.

See you next week.

Rowena Bryans

----- Original Message -----

From: George Tilley

To: alicec@mun.ca ; broeboth@morgan.ucs.mun.ca ; cftzptrck@hotmail.com ; David Duffett (Business Fax) ; davidh@personainternet.com ; Ed.Drover@freedom55financial.com ; epwalsh@nf.sympatico.ca ; fdavis@nflid.net ; h-r.mcgrath@nf.sympatico.ca ; jddawe@nf.sympatico.ca ; pearl.lew@nf.sympatico.ca ; marjorie.gibbons@nf.sympatico.ca ; pcolbert63@hotmail.com ; primrose.bishop@nf.sympatico.ca ; r.bailey@superweb.ca ; rbryans@persona.ca ; wboyd@wob.nf.ca

Sent: Thursday, October 20, 2005 9:29 AM

Subject: FW: On CBC Website - and this aired on The National last night - Unreliable test gives lessons to all labs - Oct. 19

Trustees;

I am attaching a transcript of the item on the CBC National newscast last night pertaining to our laboratory situation. Aside from what we are doing locally, there is a growing awareness that this is a national issue which is referenced in this story. I do not know who Dr. Hewlitt is, who was interviewed.

We did talk to the Canadian Patient Safety Institute yesterday to discuss who could appropriately take the lead to ensure that standards are developed in this area. They wanted some time to reflect on it. We consulted with Health Canada but unless it is associated with an equipment failure they don't get involved. I also talked to one of my CEO colleagues in Toronto, who is an oncologist, and his opinion is that this is a very "grey test". He has given us the names of a couple of breast cancer specialists in the country to get their opinion as to how this can be followed up on. We will also be writing the Canadian Association of Pathologists to suggest their involvement.

In the meantime, since we are having limited success in getting all of our key messages covered by the media, this weekend we will be taking our newsprint ads to review where we are with this. As well, today, we will start calling all patients who are being retested to advise them of when their results can

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be expected. We are hoping we can conclude that next week. I have talked to the CEO of Mount Siani Hospital, which is doing the retesting for us, to see if there is any possible way they can move the retests any faster.

George

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From: Deborah Thomas-Pennell
Sent: Thursday, October 20, 2005 8:28 AM
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Cc: Diane Hart; jennifer.deon@easternhealth.ca; Elizabeth Strange-Hollett; Heather Predham; Nancy Parsons
Subject: On CBC Website - and this aired on The National last night - Unreliable test gives lessons to all labs - Oct. 19

Unreliable tests gives lesson to all labs

*Last updated Oct 20 2005 07:20 AM NDT
 CBC News*

Tissue samples from some breast cancer survivors in Newfoundland and Labrador are being retested after a lab problem that could be repeated across the country, a medical technology expert warns.

The hormone receptor test shows if cancer cells respond to hormones. If the results are positive, patients are usually treated with the hormone therapy tamoxifen.

Reliability problems with the test in St. John's were discovered when a patient fell ill despite a negative test result, and the tissue later tested positive.

- FROM OCT. 14, 2005: [Flawed cancer tests raise patients' concerns](#)

Zita White of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Labrador, and hundreds of other women are waiting to find out if they received the correct treatment. People with a positive test result are usually treated with tamoxifen.

"If I had tested positive, I would have been given the drug tamoxifen, which would have greatly lowered my chance for recurrence," said White, who as far as she knows, is cancer-free. Officials at the St. John's lab acknowledged the problem, but they don't yet know what went wrong.



Zita White

"There's 40 steps in that process," said Bob Williams, a vice-president at the Eastern Health regional authority. "Any problem in any one step can cause a problem with the testing results."

Problems with the test are not new. The medical literature shows test results have varied widely between labs in Europe. Williams said its prompted the lab to take another look at their testing procedure at the health authority.

Canada lacks a national standard body for the tests, said Dr. Brian Hewlitt, an expert in medical technology. He said labs across the country should take a look at what they're doing to make sure they are getting it right. "I think the laboratories performing the testing are duty-bound to do some peer comparison, to take their material and have it tested in another centre and compare the results," said Hewlitt.

"On the basis of that, then you may or may not wish to become severely worried."

Breast cancer patients in Newfoundland are scrambling for answers.

"There is absolutely no doubt that there is a group of women out there that didn't get proper treatment, and that could have very dire consequences," said Peter Dawe, director of the Newfoundland and Labrador chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society.



Dr. Brian Hewlitt

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"In a perfect world, every dog would have a home and every home would have a dog."