

COUNT ME IN 4 tomorrow

Keeping you informed about Alberta's *Tomorrow Project*, a research project designed to discover more about what causes cancer and other long-term health conditions.

VOLUME TWO ~ ISSUE ONE ~ SUMMER 2011

VISIT: WWW.IN4TOMORROW.CA

We Are Coming To You!

Over the last seven months, the *Tomorrow Project* has held three successful temporary study centres in Alberta. In November 2010, we had four fully booked days in Lethbridge; in March 2011, we had three busy days in Drayton Valley; and in June 2011, we had four fully booked days in Red Deer. **Thank you to all of our participants that made these three community study centres such a success!**

Based on the response to these study centres, we have realized that the best way to help as many of our participants as possible to visit a study centre is for us to come to you.

For those Albertans who do not live near our two permanent study centres in Calgary and Edmonton, we will be setting up temporary centres in different places throughout Alberta. It is important to us that people all around the province have an opportunity to donate samples of urine, blood or saliva and have their body measurements taken. We have designed a completely mobile study centre. All of our equipment is stored in cases that can be wheeled into any location. Computer systems, body measurement equipment, blood and urine processing equipment, tables, chairs, and divider walls can be set up in about one hour.

We are planning on traveling throughout Alberta between September 2011 and April 2012. A schedule of dates for the towns and cities we will visit will be posted on our website as soon as locations are confirmed. In addition, participants in each area will be notified when we will be in that area. The *Tomorrow Project* staff are looking forward to meeting many of our participants who we have communicated with only by mail and telephone for so many years!

Please Help Us Keep Our Files Up To Date

Because the *Tomorrow Project* is a long term study, staying in touch with participants is important for the success of the project. Keeping current contact information for our participants reduces the number of participants who are 'lost to follow up'. Please take a moment to contact us with any changes or additions to your contact information. Even if you move outside of Alberta or Canada, we can send you information and updates.

Contact Us

E-mail: tomorrow@albertahealthservices.ca
Toll free telephone: 1 877 919-9292
Outside Canada: (403) 476-2469
(call collect)

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In Partnership With

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Ambassador Program

We are looking for participants who are willing to share their story about why they joined the study and why they think that being part of the *Tomorrow Project* is important.

Ambassadors believe in the purpose of the study and volunteer their time and energy to create awareness, provide information and ask others to join.

“ This study has the capacity to change the future of people I love, why wouldn't I do everything I can to help make that happen? ”

JEANNETTE VATTER,
VOLUNTEER AMBASSADOR,
DRAYTON VALLEY, ALBERTA

Why is this so important?

The *Tomorrow Project* needs to enrol 50,000 Albertans who have never been diagnosed with cancer into the study by mid 2012. To reach this goal, we need advocates in communities in urban and rural areas to tell people about the opportunity to make a difference in changing the future of cancer occurrence.

We can write, talk and broadcast about the *Tomorrow Project* but a personal voice has the most impact.

What is involved in being an ambassador?

As we travel around Alberta, we hope to have local media involved to help us spread the word about the *Tomorrow Project*. The media often want to interview a study participant and have them explain to new potential participants what being involved is all about.

Ambassadors require:

- a desire to inform others
- the ability to create awareness within their communities, workplaces, service clubs and among family and friends
- a willingness to share their story about why they joined the *Tomorrow Project* and why they feel the study is important

To learn more about becoming an ambassador for the *Tomorrow Project*,

please visit our website, e-mail us at tomorrow@albertahealthservices.ca or call us toll-free 1-877-919-9292. We will add your name to our list and contact you when we are preparing to visit your community, town or city.

Tomorrow Project Blood Samples Used in Breast Cancer Study

A recent study published by researchers led by Dr. Damaraju from the Cross Cancer Institute in Edmonton compared blood samples from 1,500 female *Tomorrow Project* participants to samples from 1,500 breast cancer patients from the PolyomX Project and the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation Tumor Bank. By analyzing all of the genes in these participants, the researchers found six previously unknown potential genes that may increase the risk of being diagnosed with breast cancer. Larger scale studies are now required to confirm the association of these genes with the risk of developing breast cancer.

Thank you to all of our participants who have donated blood samples to the *Tomorrow Project*, making research like this possible!



B Sehrawat, M Sridharan, S Ghosh, P Robson, CE Cass, JR Mackey, R Greiner, S Damaraju (2011). Potential novel candidate polymorphisms identified in genome-wide association study for breast cancer susceptibility. *Human Genetics*: Springerlink.com, 19 March 2011.

What Is A Cohort Study?

A cohort study like the *Tomorrow Project* collects information from very large numbers of people at intervals over a long period of time. Over time, some people in the cohort will develop the disease or condition being studied while others will not. Researchers will explore differences between these groups of people. This is a valuable way to collect information because the risk of developing certain diseases as people get older may be affected by their lifestyle when they were younger. The key to success for a cohort study is finding many thousands of people willing to provide health-related information over many years.

The value of a cohort study is that it can collect information about many behaviours and exposures at different times during the lives of participants. If this information is collected before the disease or condition is diagnosed, researchers can track trends in the causes and figure out better ways to improve the health of future generations. For many diseases and conditions, learning how to prevent them will be the most effective way of reducing the burden of the disease on society.

Other Cohort Studies

The Framingham Heart Study is a cohort study that began in 1948 to find out more about the causes of heart disease. Just over 5,000 participants provided information every two years for several decades. Starting in 1971, children and grandchildren of the original participants have also been recruited. Framingham researchers demonstrated that high blood pressure, high cholesterol, smoking, obesity, and diabetes were all associated with an increased risk of developing heart disease. Many of these results are now considered common knowledge, but they were groundbreaking when they were first published. As a result of the Framingham Heart Study, we learned that risk factors for heart disease can be modified by changes to diet and physical activity. It is now routine for doctors to monitor blood pressure and offer treatment if it is too high. This kind of intervention helps prevent strokes. This is just one example of how findings from a cohort study can help promote health. (<http://www.framinghamheartstudy.org>)

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The **British Doctors' Study** was a cohort of almost 35,000 male physicians in Great Britain that began in 1951. It sent out surveys over 50 years asking about smoking habits. Researchers demonstrated that smoking tobacco increases the risk of developing and dying from lung cancer. It also showed that people who quit smoking could add several years to their life expectancy that they wouldn't have if they continued to smoke. The researchers provided valuable information on the long-term health risks associated with smoking and the health benefits of quitting smoking. (<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/537834>)

Approximately one in two Albertans will develop cancer in their lifetime and approximately one in four will die of cancer.

A few other ongoing cohort studies internationally and in Canada are:

The **Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging** (CLSA) will study biological, medical, psychological, social and economic factors to understand their impact on maintaining health as people age and the development of disease and disability as people age. Based at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, several Canadian universities are involved with the goal of enrolling 50,000 Canadians. (<http://www.clsa-elcv.ca/en/welcome>)

The **European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition** (EPIC) has recruited over 500,000 participants in ten different European countries. It was designed to investigate the relationship between diet, lifestyle and environment and the development of cancer and other chronic diseases. (<http://epic.iarc.fr/>)

The **UK Biobank** recruited 500,000 people in England, Scotland and Wales in three years between 2007 and 2010. Researchers will explore how health is affected by lifestyle, environment and genes in an age group (40-69) at risk for serious diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes and dementia. It aims to develop better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat many diseases. (<http://www.ukbiobank.ac.uk>)

Staff Fundraising Efforts

Many Tomorrow Project staff have been personally affected by cancer, and are involved in doing what they can to support cancer research outside of work. Two groups of staff have participated in fundraising events for the Alberta Cancer Foundation this year.

On Saturday, June 4, 2011, ten Calgary staff members took to the streets of Calgary with 1,450 others to run 10km or walk 5km in the Underwear Affair. The team Keep Your Plumbing Running for Tomorrow raised close to \$4,500 to support finding a cure for cancers 'below the waist' (prostate, colorectal, ovarian, testicular, bladder, cervical, uterine). These cancers account for 33% of all newly diagnosed cancers in Alberta each year. The event raised over \$855,000.



Underwear Affair Team 2011

On the weekend of June 25-26, 2011, five Edmonton staff members cycled 200km along the Rocky Mountains in the Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer. The Tomorrow Project team raised \$17,163 to help the Alberta Cancer Foundation support cancer research, prevention and screening initiatives, and patient support programs at 17 cancer centres throughout Alberta. Over 15,000 new patients access these centres each year. 2,280 people participated in the event which raised an impressive \$8.6 million.



Ride To Conquer Cancer Team 2011

Why Do I Need To Sign A New Consent Form?

In 2008, the *Tomorrow Project* joined the *Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project* (CPTP, www.partnershipfortomorrow.ca) and aims to have 50,000 Albertans who are willing to contribute to the CPTP by mid 2012. People who joined the *Tomorrow Project* between 2001 and 2008 before CPTP existed have not provided consent to contribute to the larger CPTP. If you choose to contribute to the larger project, you will need to sign the new consent form, in addition to completing the new questionnaire. If you choose not to contribute to the larger study, you will continue to be a very valuable participant in Alberta's *Tomorrow Project*.



Benefits Of Being A Participant

Participating in the *Tomorrow Project* will likely not provide you with any **direct individual benefits**. Information and samples that you provide could be stored for many years before they are analyzed. The results of the *Tomorrow Project* will mostly help future generations. This study will lead to a better understanding of the causes of cancer which may help to prevent cancer in our children and grandchildren. Being a *Tomorrow Project* participant now is your opportunity to make a difference in the future.

Study Update

In February 2011, the *Tomorrow Project* celebrated our 10th anniversary of the first participant joining the study. Thank you to all of our participants who have joined the study over the last decade!

The *Tomorrow Project* had 31,218 participants join the study before the *Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project* existed. So far, 8,174 of these participants have chosen to contribute to the larger project. Many of the remaining participants have not received their invitation packages yet, so we hope that this number will increase once they do! In addition, 4,763 participants have volunteered for the *Tomorrow Project* and agreed to contribute to the larger project.

The *Tomorrow Project* has a total of 35,981 participants with 12,937 so far agreeing to contribute to the *Canadian Partnership for Tomorrow Project*. If you have your questionnaire at home, it is not too late to send it back to us. The *Tomorrow Project* will be accepting these questionnaires until 2012.



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The Tomorrow Project

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