

## When patients have cancer

### *The Canadian Cancer Society is there to help*

Robin K. Futcher, MHSC

The services of the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) are available to health professionals, their patients, and the general public. The mission of the CCS is to eradicate cancer and to enhance the quality of life of people living with cancer. The CCS is a national, community-based organization of volunteers that achieves its mission through research, education, patient services, fund-raising, and influence on public policy.

Health care professionals and patients can access information and support from the CCS three ways: by calling the Cancer Information Service (CIS) at 1-888-939-3333, by visiting the CCS website at [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca), or by contacting local offices (number in telephone book) (Figure 1). Services provided by the CCS can vary from province to province.

Physicians are encouraged to contact the CCS for information on treatment options, clinical practice guidelines, and resource materials for patients. Patients can benefit from the CCS as a source of both information and support.

Many people feel overwhelmed and numb after being diagnosed with cancer. One way to help them cope with the disease is to provide them with good information and support.

#### Print resources

The CCS has a large collection of materials for cancer patients, for their friends and families, and for the general public. Nationally produced materials are reviewed annually; topics include cancer prevention and risk reduction, information on specific cancers, coping, and supportive care issues including palliative care. Target audiences for these materials include

people living with cancer, people being treated for cancer, friends and family of cancer patients, and the general public.

As much as possible, the CCS offers materials at no charge. Print resources for office distribution to patients can be obtained by calling the local CCS office or by accessing the CCS website at [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) (where selected documents are available).

Over the last 2 years, the five most frequently requested print resources were the *Breast Self-Examination*, *SunSense*, *Information About Breast Health*, and *Eating For The Good of Your Health* pamphlets and the *SunSense* bookmark.

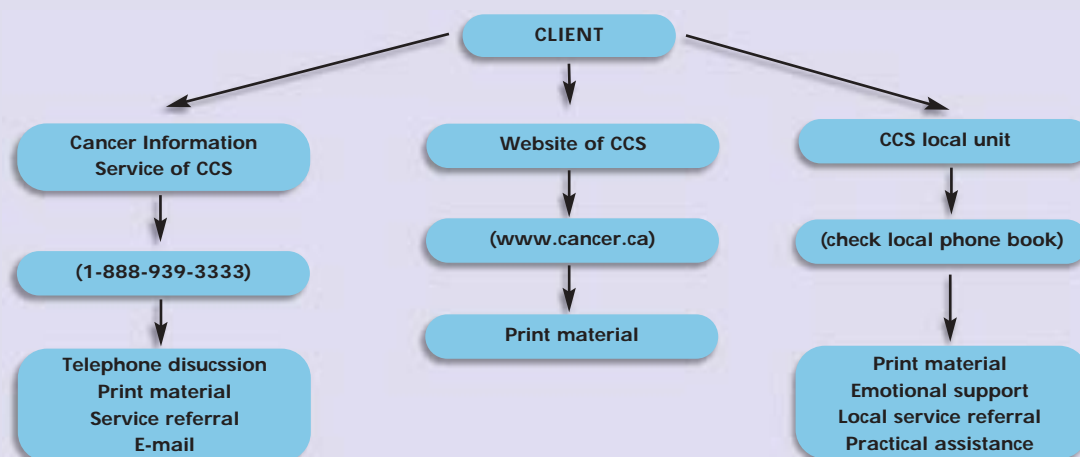
#### Cancer Information Service

Launched in October 1996, the CIS has a mandate to provide comprehensive, current, and credible information in a timely and sensitive manner to meet or exceed the information needs of clients.

The CIS provides information through a toll-free telephone line (1-888-939-3333) that offers bilingual (English and French) service to callers from 9 AM to 6 PM Monday to Friday anywhere in Canada. The service is provided through information centres located in Vancouver, BC; Regina, Sask; Hamilton, Ont; and Montreal, Que.

Sixty information specialists (equivalent to about 22 full-time employees) answered 90 000 calls during 1999-2000. Information specialists (staff and volunteers) have backgrounds mostly in nursing, social work, education, or nutrition. The CIS service helps to augment existing methods of distributing information. The CIS now has e-mail capability also; Canadians with questions about cancer can reach the CIS at [info@cis.cancer.ca](mailto:info@cis.cancer.ca).

Figure 1. Ways to access Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) services



## Resources ♦ Ressources

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Referring patients to the CIS will enable them to receive the most current information on community resources and also information on the full spectrum of cancer control from prevention through early detection, treatment, palliation, and supportive care. Physicians can obtain specific information on treatment options, on clinical practice guidelines, and on resource material for patients. The CIS distributes material developed by the CCS and by other sources.

### ***Canadian Cancer Encyclopedia™***

The *Canadian Cancer Encyclopedia* (CCE) is at the heart of the information provided by the CIS. It is a bilingual (English and French) cancer information and reference database used by the information specialists when answering questions about cancer. The encyclopedia has 56 chapters organized by cancer site and related topics (eg, prevention, pain management). A typical chapter contains information on risk factors, risk reduction, signs and symptoms, screening, diagnosis, pathology and staging, treatment, supportive care, and research and new developments.

Sections of CCE chapters may be printed off for clients if appropriate to their information needs. The encyclopedia is scheduled to be added to the CCS's website in 2001.

### **Community services database**

This database lists community resources, programs, and services across Canada (both CCS and non-CCS programs and initiatives). More than 6000 entries are listed, and approximately 45% of all inquiries to the CIS are given at least one community service referral.

### **Website**

The CCS's bilingual cancer information website ([www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)) contains selected CCS publications, educational resources, and a calendar of events. It also has links to relevant organizations, such as other CCS Divisions and the National Cancer Institute of Canada (the CCS's research partner).

### **Programs**

The CCS's programs have evolved to meet the social, spiritual, emotional, and information needs of people with cancer and their families. Programs aim to provide support and opportunities for people to find comfort, meaning, dignity, and hope through their personal experience with cancer. The array of programs and services offered across the country varies by location; details of local programs can be obtained from local CCS offices and from the CIS.

Trained volunteers lead the CCS emotional support programs, which can be one-on-one (patients are matched with trained volunteers who have already lived the cancer experience) or in a group format.

Practical assistance, which is available to cancer patients who satisfy certain eligibility requirements, can include accommodation and transportation. Not all CCS units are able to offer practical assistance. You can call the local CCS office to find out if practical assistance is available for your patients. ♦

### **Acknowledgment**

*I sincerely thank the people at the Canadian Cancer Society who took time to provide insight during development of this article.*

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