

# Health Sciences North 2024 Annual Meeting

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Report from the Chair,  
Patient and Family Advisory Council

**Lauri Petz**



Health Sciences North  
Horizon Santé-Nord

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**Annual Meeting – June 12, 2024**

It is my pleasure to present to you the advancements that the Patient and Family Advisory program has made over the past year and to highlight HSN and HSNRI in their continued commitment to partnering with patients and families to integrate their voice and perspective into how they deliver care and services. HSN believes that having patients as part of its teams will lead to better health outcomes and greater patient and family satisfaction.

Patient and Family Advisors (PFAs) are community members who want to be involved in improving health care. Many PFAs have extensive experience as either a patient, family member or caregiver. They are a diverse group with an array of backgrounds and experiences, but all of them are passionate about improving the quality of care at HSN. In 2023-2024, we saw 34 active PFAs who served as a “voice” for patients and their family members who had received care and treatment at HSN.

I became involved with the Patient and Family Advisory program 10 years ago after my diagnosis and treatment for cancer at the then Northeast Cancer Centre. I was cared for with compassion and skill. However, throughout my journey, I felt that the patient voice needed to be heard to change the process of navigating a somewhat intimidating system where communication was at times assumed. I saw a poster promoting the program and I made the call hopefully to assist others like myself to have an easier time in navigating their care journey. At that time, I was so impressed that HSN actually wanted to hear from patients. Over the years, I have appreciated the voice I have had at all of the different areas in which I have been involved. I have been at tables with frontline staff, doctors, nurses, managers, directors and Senior Leadership at both the local and provincial level.

The Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) is dedicated to strengthening collaboration between patients and family members and the health care team to enhance HSN’s ability to deliver the highest standard of safe, comprehensive and compassionate health care. PFAC members continually look for new opportunities to communicate and collaborate among patients, families and staff, and strive to identify and support opportunities for improvement from the patient and family perspective.

Our perspective has helped inform decisions and set priorities for the organization. This is evident through our contribution to the development of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan for HSN and HSNRI and the subsequent engagement in 169 activities this past year that has led to achieving strategic key goals. PFAs have also already had early input into the formation of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

The opening of the Acute and Reactivation Care Centre (ARCC) in November 2023 is an excellent example of how patient engagement can lead to improved patient experience. In alignment with the key goal to “*Be Patient and Family Focused,*” HSN designed the ARCC in partnership with PFAs and with older adult patients in mind. The ARCC provides

recreational and rehabilitative care activities, and a full team of nurses and allied health with specialized training.

In alignment with the goal to “*Strengthen our Academic and Research Impact*”, HSNRI has partnered with PFAs to initiate a patient-oriented research plan to prioritize patient engagement and collaboration throughout all stages of the research process. PFAs have played a pivotal role in both the design and execution of studies, and providing the essential patient perspective to reshape the approach to research methodologies. Additionally, PFAs are valued committee members on both the HSNRI Program Council and Research Ethics Board, where PFAs actively contribute to the operationalization of program goals and provide the patient voice with ethical discussions that arise when reviewing upcoming and current research projects at HSN and HSNRI. By incorporating patient perspectives and expertise into research, we can generate more meaningful and impactful results that will ultimately improve the health and well-being of our communities.

As my second year concludes as the Chair of the PFAC, I want to express my sincere thanks and gratitude for the opportunity to work with this council and the staff and leaders at HSN and HSNRI. We all work and volunteer from the perspective of our lived experience. It has been an honour to chair a council that brings diverse voices and commitment to assist HSN and HSNRI in their quest to continue to put the patient at the centre of everything they do. It has also been an honour to meet and participate in meetings with hardworking, dedicated staff and leaders who only want to do what is best for patients. On behalf of the PFAs, we would like to thank HSN and HSNRI for the ongoing support of always ensuring that the patient voice is constantly heard.

Let me conclude by also acknowledging the members of the PFAC who served with me this past year:

- Andrea Fortin: 2023-2024 Vice Chair
- Carla Bossart-Pletzart
- Kristin Bouchard
- Samantha Kuula
- Ann Matte
- Elizabeth Mulligan
- Rita OLink
- Rylee Restoule
- Hom Shrestha
- Courtney Skuro

The community’s strong sense of connection with HSN continues, and we remain hopeful that by bringing diverse voices into the planning process and allowing for consideration of perspectives that may not otherwise be understood, HSN will continue to strengthen its culture and practices to enhance patient and family-centred care and improving the patient experience.

Thank you.