

# Health Sciences North 2025 Annual Meeting

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Report from the Chair,  
Patient and Family Advisory Council  
**Lauri Petz**



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### **Annual Meeting – June 18, 2025**

I'm excited to share the progress made by the Patient and Family Advisory Program over the past year and highlight how HSN and HSNRI continue to prioritize collaboration with patients and families. By actively involving patients in shaping care and services, HSN reinforces its commitment to the belief that incorporating patient voices leads to better health outcomes and increased satisfaction for both patients and their families.

Patient and Family Advisors (PFAs) are dedicated community members who bring a wealth of experience to the table. Many have firsthand experience as patients, caregivers, or family members. Although they come from diverse backgrounds, they all share a common goal: to improve the quality of care at HSN.

PFAs play a vital role in driving positive change within the healthcare system by sharing our lived experiences and perspectives. Our firsthand accounts provide crucial insights into the realities of patient care, often bringing attention to gaps in communication, processes, or services that might otherwise go unnoticed by healthcare professionals or administrators. By sharing our stories, PFAs help identify areas where improvements are needed, whether in the delivery of care, the level of empathy shown, or the overall hospital environment. This feedback allows healthcare providers to better understand the emotional and physical challenges patients face, ensuring a more holistic approach to care.

Representing the voice of patients and families has enabled PFAs to partner with HSN in refining policies and practices to ensure that care is more patient-centered. This collaboration fosters continuous improvement, ensuring the hospital evolves to meet the needs of those it serves.

My involvement with the Patient and Family Advisory Program began 11 years ago, following my diagnosis and treatment for cancer at the Shirley and Jim Fielding Northeast Cancer Centre. I was treated with compassion and skill, but throughout my journey, I felt that the patient voice was often overlooked in navigating a complex and sometimes overwhelming system. I saw a poster promoting the program and decided to reach out, hoping to make it easier for others to navigate their care journey. At the time, I was impressed that HSN genuinely wanted to hear from patients.

This year marks the end of my journey as a PFA with HSN as I move onto other interests. I have truly valued the opportunity to contribute to a variety of initiatives, working alongside so many amazing people at HSN who are committed, dedicated and honestly make such a difference to patients lives daily by listening and responding with skill, care and compassion.

The Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) who meet with Senior Leadership, is dedicated to strengthening collaboration between patients, family members, and the healthcare team to enhance HSN's ability to deliver safe, comprehensive, and compassionate care. PFAC members are constantly exploring new ways to improve communication and cooperation among patients, families, and staff, identifying areas for improvement from the patient and family perspective.

Our contributions have played an essential role in shaping key decisions and setting organizational priorities, including the development of HSN and HSNRI's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. PFAs were involved early in the process, providing valuable feedback during the plan's validation phase, both as a council and as members of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee.

In 2024-25, we had 30 active PFAs representing the voices of patients, families, and caregivers who had received care at HSN. Together, we collaborated with HSN leadership on 142 engagement activities aimed at enhancing the patient experience. As PFAC members, we also offered direct feedback to the CEO, recognizing the organization's achievements while pointing out areas for improvement. Updates on initiatives linked to PFA recommendations were consistently discussed at PFAC meetings, ensuring our feedback was always taken into consideration.

One of the strategic goals of HSN and HSNRI is to be socially accountable. This goal emphasizes the importance of authentic community engagement to address priority health concerns and reduce health equity gaps for northern residents. As part of this work, HSN has established a robust Social Accountability team, which includes PFAs leading critical initiatives to foster a culture that is diverse, inclusive, equitable, and free from discrimination and racism.

In alignment with HSN's strategic goal to be digitally enabled, PFAs played a role in informing the design of the Electronic Medical Records (EMR) by providing valuable insights into patients' needs, preferences, and experiences with healthcare systems. Their input helped to ensure that the EMR was not only clinically effective but also user-friendly and accessible to those directly impacted by it. By shaping their perspective on issues such as data privacy, communication with healthcare providers and ease of navigating medical information, PFAs helped shape EMR to be aligned with patient-centred care.

As my term as Chair of the PFAC comes to an end, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the opportunity to work with this dedicated council, as well as with the staff and leadership at HSN and HSNRI. Our work is fueled by our personal experiences, and it has been a privilege to lead a council that embraces diverse perspectives and is committed to supporting HSN and HSNRI in their mission to place patients at the center of everything they do. It has

been an honor to collaborate with such dedicated and hardworking staff and leaders, all of whom are deeply committed to what is best for patients. On behalf of the PFAs, I'd like to extend our thanks to HSN and HSNRI for their continued dedication to ensuring that the patient voice remains central to everything they do.

Finally, I would like to recognize and thank the members of the PFAC who have served alongside me this past year.

- Carla Bossart-Pletzer: 2025-2025 Vice Chair
- Kristin Bouchard
- Andrea Fortin
- Della Kreiger
- Samantha Kuula
- Elizabeth Mulligan
- Rita Olink
- Hom Shrestha
- Courtney Skuro
- Laura Volti

The community's deep connection with HSN remains strong, and we are optimistic that by incorporating a variety of voices into the planning process and ensuring that perspectives which might otherwise go unheard are considered, HSN will continue to strengthen its culture and practices, further enhancing patient and family-centered care and improving the overall patient experience.