

Health Sciences North 2026 Annual Meeting

Report from the Chair,
Patient and Family Advisory Council
Brenda Carr



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Good evening, and thank you for being here.

As Chair of the Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC), I am pleased to reflect on another year of meaningful collaboration and progress. Over the past year, we have continued to strengthen partnerships between patients, families, and care teams, ensuring that lived experience remains central to how care is shaped and delivered across HSN and HSNRI.

Patient- and family-centred care is more than a guiding principle - it is reflected in everyday practice, from decision-making to service improvements across the organization. By listening to and valuing the perspectives of patients and families, we help create a healthcare environment that is more responsive, inclusive, and focused on what matters most to those we serve.

Patient and Family Advisors (PFAs) are individuals who have experienced care at HSN personally or alongside a loved one and volunteer their time to help improve the healthcare system. Through participation on committees, quality improvement initiatives, and reviews of programs, patient education materials, and design plans, PFAs contribute valuable insights that complement clinical and operational expertise. Their involvement helps ensure care remains respectful, responsive, and aligned with patient and family priorities.

My involvement with the Patient and Family Advisory Program officially began in 2023, although my journey started several years earlier through conversations with a member of the Patient Relations team. During that time, I shared my experiences and proposed solutions to challenges I had encountered as a patient and family member. I was encouraged to consider becoming a PFA, and after reflecting on how my experiences could contribute to positive change, I decided to apply - a decision I have never regretted.

Serving as a PFA has been incredibly rewarding. It has provided opportunities to collaborate with staff, leadership, and fellow advisors on initiatives that improve the patient and family experience. It has also deepened my understanding of the planning, collaboration, and commitment required to support continuous improvement across the organization.

These experiences inspired me to pursue a leadership role as Chair of PFAC. In this role, I remain committed to fostering collaboration, respect, and continuous improvement while ensuring patient and family perspectives remain at the forefront of organizational priorities.

What continues to motivate me is the belief that every patient and family member deserves to feel heard, respected, and supported. My experience as a PFA has reinforced the importance



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of using our collective voices to influence meaningful and lasting change across the organization.

PFAC meets regularly with Senior Leadership and works to strengthen partnerships between patients, families, and healthcare teams. Drawing on lived experience, Council members provide valuable insights that help shape planning, service delivery, and evaluation throughout the organization.

Throughout the year, PFAC input informed several key organizational priorities and initiatives, including the Digital and Data Strategy, the patient portal, the North East Regional Cancer Plan, and ongoing wayfinding improvements.

Improving the main lobby and strengthening wayfinding remained important areas of focus for PFAC and Patient and Family Advisors. Feedback consistently highlights the challenges patients and visitors face when navigating the hospital, including unclear signage and difficulty locating departments. Advisors continue to advocate for clearer signage and more intuitive design to help create a more accessible, welcoming, and patient-centred environment.

PFAAs also recognize the growing need to expand hospital facilities to better meet the needs of the community. Rising patient volumes, limited space, and longer wait times continue to place pressure on the healthcare system and can impact the overall patient experience. Expansion presents an opportunity to improve access to services, enhance patient flow, and create more comfortable, private, and supportive care spaces designed with safety, accessibility, and patient-centred care in mind.

In 2025–26, the Patient and Family Advisory Program included 30 Patient and Family Advisors who contributed their lived experience as patients, family members, and caregivers. Together, they participated in 107 engagement activities with hospital leadership focused on improving the patient experience. PFAC members also provided direct input to the CEO, recognizing successes while identifying opportunities for continued improvement. Regular updates on initiatives influenced by advisor feedback helped ensure patient and family perspectives remained embedded in decision-making.

I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to work alongside this dedicated council, as well as the staff and leadership at HSN and HSNRI. The commitment shown by all involved reflects a shared focus on improving care experiences and outcomes for patients and families.



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On behalf of the Patient and Family Advisors, I would also like to thank HSN and HSNRI for their continued commitment to ensuring the patient voice remains central to their work.

Finally, I would like to recognize my fellow PFAC members for their time, insight, and dedication over the past year:

- Courtney Skuro – 2025–2026 Vice Chair
- Kristin Bouchard
- Taryn Green
- Jessica Grenier
- Elizabeth Mulligan
- Rita Olink
- Hom Shrestha
- Laura Volti

HSN continues to maintain a strong connection with the community, and we are encouraged by the organization's commitment to including diverse perspectives - particularly voices that are not always heard - in planning and decision-making. By continuing to prioritize these perspectives, HSN is well positioned to strengthen patient- and family-centred care and further enhance the experience of patients and families across Northeastern Ontario.

Thank you.