

Sexual and Gender Diversity in Cancer Care (SGDc) Program

Year End Report 2023



@PMChosenFamily
Sexual and Gender Diversity in Cancer Care



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Land Acknowledgment

The Princess Margaret is based in Tkarónto (Toronto), which is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit and is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabek, Huron Wendat, Chippewa, Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the Credit and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

In the spirit of reconciliation, it is important to acknowledge that we live and work on Indigenous land. We are committed to decolonization and stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, communities, and nations.

We support building and sustaining relationships with Indigenous people based on respect, dignity, trust and cooperation, in the process of advancing truth, reconciliation and justice.

2-spirit Indigenous people of Turtle Island have a long history of gender fluidity and played a sacred and honoured role in their communities before colonization. We give thanks to our ancestors.



Message from the Executive Team

In looking back over the work completed in 2023 from the SGDC Program, we have much to celebrate and be proud of. During the first 2 years of our program, the focus included resource development and navigation, developing community connections and then an education program for Health Care Providers (HCPs). This year we have moved to expanding the clinical component of our program. We completed significant milestones and goals related to our 2 long term projects; the SGDC e-learning program and our Quality Improvement Study with our patient partners and chosen family members which has been instrumental to expanding the clinical component of our work.

The e-learning project will be launching in May, 2024, on the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia – the perfect occasion and way to kick off Pride activities. The eLearning will provide HCPs with important information about key terms and concepts as well an engaging, fun and interactive opportunity to practice inclusive communication skills with patient avatars. We are planning a special event for this long-awaited launch and everyone is welcome to attend. Check the SGDC website for details.

2023 marked the completion of 21 patient interviews, about their experiences at Princess Margaret and what they would like to see from our program. We heard many examples of positive experiences, but also valuable feedback for areas of improvement, what is missing and what we can do better. The full results will be released later in 2024. We listened very carefully. The interview data has been pivotal in assisting us to better understand the clinical components of inclusive SGDC care, and implementing this into the patient care provided through our program. Valuable feedback from patients has allowed us to look carefully at the intersections of cancer and SGD patients, and to uncover many important themes about how cancer care is experienced.

These current times of rising anti-trans attitudes and policies that are seeping into our institutions in Canada, have an unsettling effect on feelings of safety and security for SGD communities locally and globally. This reminds us of the need, now more than ever, for inclusive care to SGDC patients and the need for our program. We hope that our work can continue to grow and expand, to be a safe landing place to those feeling in need of extra support. We look forward to continued work together in 2024.

Warm regards from the SGDC Executive Team,

Christian, Margo, Jennifer, Samantha and Brendan



Sexual and Gender Diversity (SGD)

Sexual and gender diversity is a term used to refer to people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual and (+) any gender identities or sexual orientations not included in this acronym).

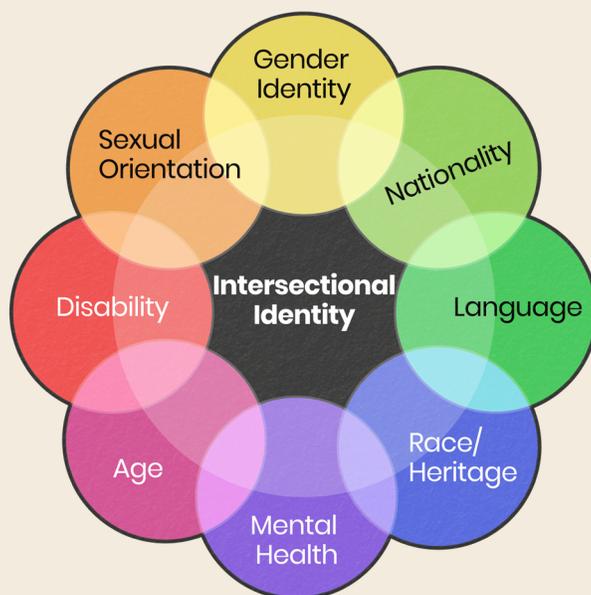
SGD is the term that our program has adopted to include all of the diverse expressions of gender identities and sexual orientations.

Health Equity

The SGDC program is committed to achieving health equity and to decrease cancer care disparities in SGDC communities. We are leaders in cancer care for 2SLGBTQIA+ patients and we collaboratively, develop innovative strategies and solutions to improve cancer care experiences for our communities.

We aim to create an environment of inclusive care, where patients and chosen families feel welcome, valued, included, and respected. We recognise the diversity of our patient population and the systems that reinforce marginalization, as well as power and privilege. These factors shape individual experiences and access to care.

Our goal is to transform cancer care by delivering high quality care that is equitable for all patients regardless of their race, ethnicity, income, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation. We acknowledge the harm that healthcare systems have caused to SGDC communities and recognise our responsibility to make changes within the system and rebuild trust. To ensure the best quality of care for SGDC patients and their loved ones, we emphasize advocating for inclusion and access to the healthcare system.



Overview of Membership

Executive Team

Christian Schulz-Quach (he/him), Program Director

Margo Kennedy (she/her), Clinical Lead

Brendan Lyver (he/him), Research Analyst

Jennifer Croke (she/her), Education Lead, e-Learning Project Committee

Samantha Scime (she/her), Presentations Team, e-Learning Project Committee



Committee Members:

Tori Anderson (she/her), e-Learning Project Committee

Leonard Benoit (he/him), Indigenous Patient Navigator

Lisa Brugger (she/her), Committee member

Jennifer Catsburg (she/her), Committee member

Rose-Marie Fraser (she/her/kwe), Presentations Team

Mason Gibson (she/her), Team Spirit Specialist

Shawn Hercules (he/they), Needs Assessment Committee

Nazlin Jivraj (she/her), Presentations Team

Thomas Kais-Prial (he/him), Finance Specialist

Paige Lau (she/her), Needs Assessment Committee

Diego Malon Gimenez (he/him), Committee member

Luxshiga Premakumar (she/her), Media Committee member

Enrique Sanz Garcia (he/him), Committee member

Brian Serapio (he/him), Committee member

Ayssa Scipio (she/her), Committee member

Marlie Smith (she/her), AYA

Lauren Squires (she/her), Needs Assessment Lead, Presentation Team

Mary Stuart (she/her), Committee member

Emily Taylor (she/her), Graphic Illustrations Lead

Erin Walker (they/she), Website Lead

External Advisors:

Marie-Anne Archambault-Grenier (she/her/elle), Satellite partner

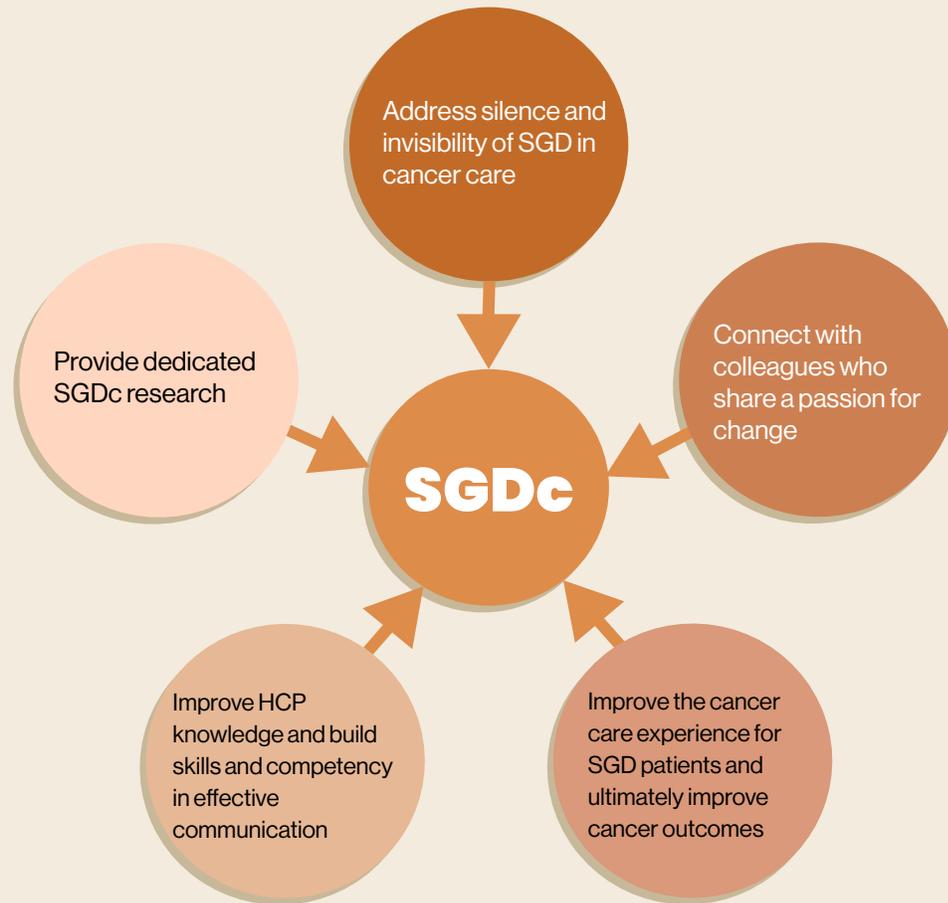
Amanda Bolderston (she/her), Research Fellow

Andrew Matthew (he/him), Program Advisor

Gilla Shapiro (she/her), Program Advisor, e-Learning Project Committee & Needs Assessment Committee

Our Commitments

Over the last 3 years, the commitments below continue to guide our collaborative work.



What are some of the unique challenges that are faced by SGD patients

Heteronormative practices of care

Limited inclusive cancer care support groups and tailored resources

Barriers to sharing sexual orientation & gender identity

Limited inclusion of a patient's chosen family

Impact of past experiences of discrimination in health care

Impact of healthcare providers varying knowledge and communication skills related to SGD

Our Working Group

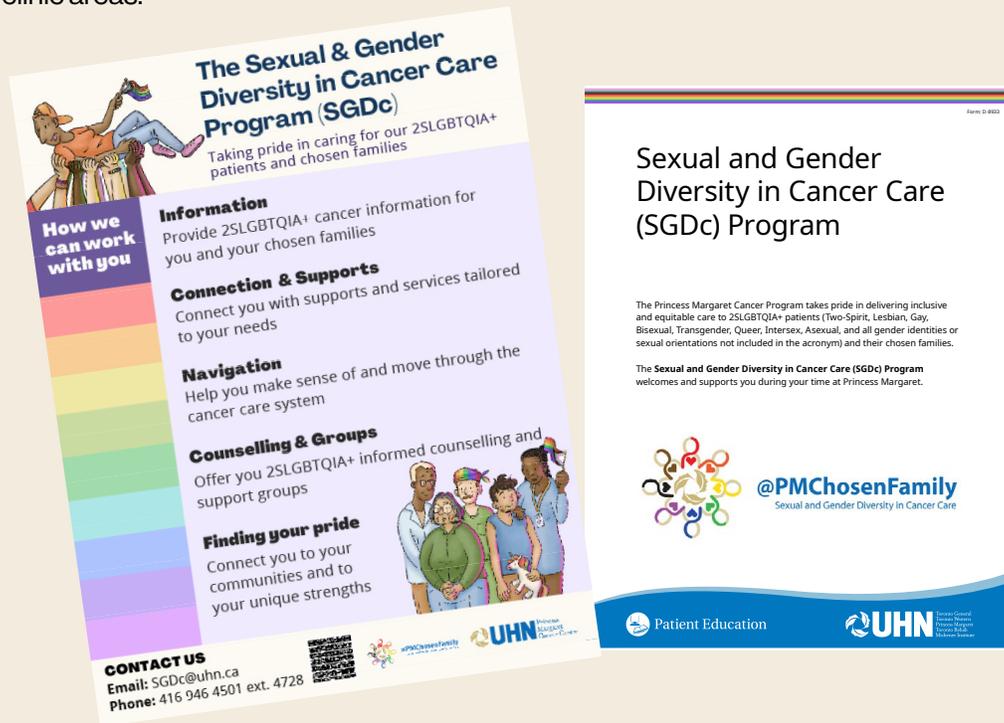
Our numbers have continued to grow from 23 program members in 2022 to a strong and diverse team of 29 members at the close of 2023. We have representation from the following disciplines: Cancer Education, Financial Services, Healthcare Learners, Indigenous Patient Navigation, Medical Fellows, Medical Oncology, Medical Residents, Music Therapy, Nursing, Psychiatry, Psychology, Radiation Oncology, Radiation Therapy, Research, Research Fellows, and Social Work.

Our SGDc Program gives generously of their time, pro bono, outside of paid work hours (with the exception of the .5 research analyst position and .5 clinical social work lead position). All members of our group bring a personal connection and passion to this issue; identifying as a member of the SGD community or having a close friend, loved one, child or sibling who identifies as 2SLGBTQIA+. We recognize the vulnerability experienced and often required from our SGDc patients receiving care, and we take this to heart and remind ourselves to step up and be vulnerable as well. We also acknowledge the privilege this brings, and not all staff are in a position to share their identities in all domains of their lives.



SGDc Patient Support and Clinical Services

2023 was the first year that the SGDc provided clinical services throughout the entire year! We saw an increase in patient referrals for counselling, consultation and support. We began to extend our outreach to patients and their chosen family members at Princess Margaret through the development of a patient brochure and poster that are available in clinic areas.



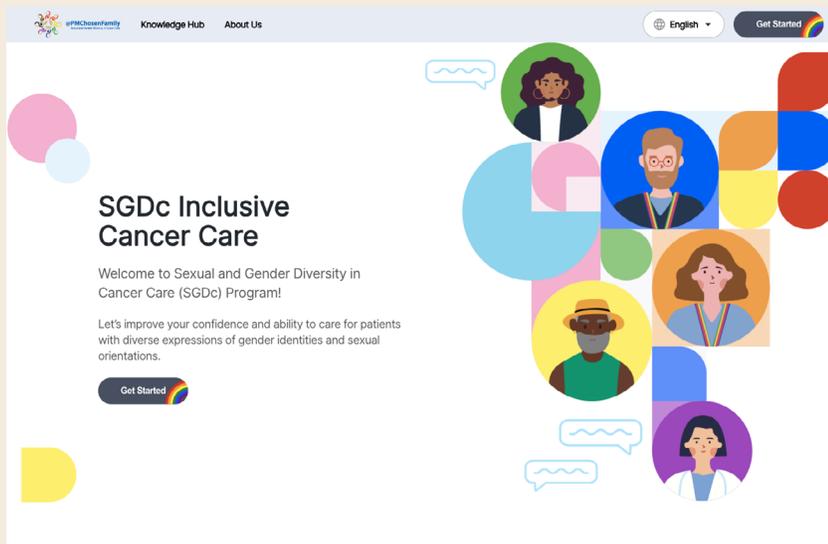
Inclusive Documents Consultations

Questions about language, correct terms to use, using inclusive language, are the most common questions we are asked. This is understandable in a field where language is constantly evolving. We have been asked to provide our expertise in revising the consent form used across Ontario for clinical trials. It is important to create inclusive clinical trials documents to ensure that all patients feel safe and that everyone is included on the forms. Developing inclusive clinical trials documents can be challenging, particularly in using gender-neutral language that's easily understood by all. We were pleased to provide feedback to the consent form, an important first step to inclusive care in clinical trials.

SGDc Inclusive Cancer Care: An Interactive eLearning Tool

This eLearning project offers an interactive “gaming” platform designed for healthcare providers to delve into the four fundamental pillars of delivering culturally competent inclusive care. These pillars encompass pronouns, sexual orientation, gender identity, and relationship diversity. Healthcare providers (HCPs) have the option to select one of four distinct patient avatars, each embodying a distinct identity and narrative. Through interactive scenarios, HCPs can cultivate respectful and inclusive communication skills while engaging with virtual avatars, thereby enhancing support for SGDc patients and their families. The module provides opportunities for HCPs to interact with virtual avatars and address unique concerns specific to SGDc patients. Notably, this project has truly been a collaborative experience as we have worked with and collected feedback from key SGDc partners, HCPs and our SGDc patient partners.

Our e-learning module is now complete and is available to use on any device at PMChosenFamily.ca! Stay tuned for our launch party in May 2024!



Improve practice with four key topics

Learn about four key topics of Inclusive Cancer Care: Pronouns, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Relationship Diversity.



Learn through conversations

Understand the needs and preferences of patients by engaging in conversations, designed by experts in the field of inclusive care.

The conversations can help you gain valuable insights into the unique experiences of patients. This will equip you with the knowledge needed to provide healthcare services that are responsive to everyone's needs.

Presentations & Conferences

Throughout 2023, we seized various opportunities to present our initiatives at multiple PM site meetings, rounds, grand rounds presentations, and national conferences, as well as to community patient groups. Our presentations primarily focused on the importance and methods of delivering inclusive care to SGDC patients and chosen families, strategies for healthcare provider education, our needs assessment and our e-learning initiative. As a result, we have amassed a repository of over 100 PowerPoint slides, offering flexibility to select and tailor presentations according to the audience and specific topics.

Scimes, S., & Jivraj, N. Coping with Illness: Biopsychosocial Factors Sexual and Gender Diversity in Cancer Care (SGDC). February 2nd, 2023.

Kennedy, M. PM Social Workers: Assessing the needs of SGDC Patients. March 17th, 2023.

Lau, P., Kennedy, M., Lyver, B., Scime, S., & Squire, L. Providing Inclusive Care for 2SLGBTQIA+ Patients Receiving Radiation Therapy (Part 1 of 2). March 22nd, 2023.

Lau, P., Kennedy, M., Lyver, B., Scime, S., & Squire, L. Providing Inclusive Care for 2SLGBTQIA+ Patients Receiving Radiation Therapy (Part 2 of 2). March 24th, 2023.

Scimes, S., & Jivraj, N. Supportive Care: Research and Initiatives in Sexual and Gender Diversity in Cancer (SGDC). March 27th, 2023.

Scimes, S., & Jivraj, N. Sexual and Gender Diversity in Cancer (SGDC). May 18th, 2023.

Lyver, B., Kennedy, M., Scime, S., & Schulz-Quach, C. Creating Inclusive Care. May 30th, 2023.

Schulz-Quach, C., & Croke, J. Development of a SGDC Program- Who cares? June 5th, 2023.

Schulz-Quach, C., & Croke, J. Improving communication and inclusive care for SGDC - getting it right! June 19th, 2023.

Schulz-Quach, C., Kennedy, M., Achambault-Grenier, M.A., & Lyver, B. Creating an Inclusive Care Cancer Program. June 21st, 2023.

Kennedy, M. Assessing the Needs of SGDC Patients. June 21st, 2023.

Taylor, E., & Squires, L. Beyond Words: The use of graphic medicine to convey the results of a needs assessment with SGDC. June 21st, 2023.

Schulz-Quach, C., Shapiro, G., Croke, J., & Scimes, S. E-Learning for Inclusive Cancer Care. July 27th, 2023.

Schulz-Quach, C., & Achambault-Grenier, M.A. Cancer, Sexuality & Sexual Well-Being Symposium. September 11th, 2023.

Croke, J. Improving communication and inclusive care for SGDC. October 5th, 2023.



Premakur, L., Kennedy, M., & Lyver, B. Beyond Words: The use of graphic medicine to convey the results of a needs assessment with SGDC. October 5th, 2023.

Lyver, B., & Squire, L. Inclusive Communication in Cancer Care. October 11th, 2023.

Squire, L., & Kennedy, M. Inclusive Cancer Care – CRS Part 1. October 20th, 2023.

Shapiro, G., & Kennedy, M. Development of a New e-learning tool on SGDC for Health Care Professionals. October 26th, 2023.

Bilash, T. & SGDC Executive team. Spare Parts: Learning from a Transgender Man Navigating Ovarian Cancer. November 3rd, 2023.

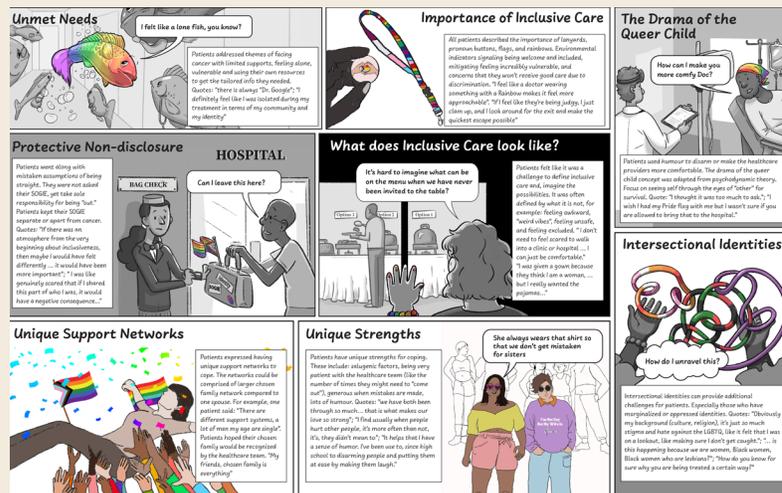
Schulz-Quach, C., Lyver, B., & Croke, J. Princess Margaret Innovation Rounds. November 9th, 2023.

Lyver, B., & Scime, S. Inclusive Cancer Care: E-Learning. November 24th, 2023.

Schulz-Quach, C., & Scimes, S. Change management and leadership from building and growing SGDC. December 8th, 2023.

Research

In 2023, we launched our SGDc Patient Needs Assessment! While there were some difficulties in connecting with SGDc patients, we are happy to announce that we interviewed 21 patients in 2023! The interviews collected information on SGDc patient experiences at Princess Margaret, asked how care can be improved, and what patients would like the SGDc to offer. We learned so much from these interviews and are very grateful to our SGDc patient community for reaching out. At the halfway point in our QI study, we did a preliminary analysis. The graphic medicine poster below, illustrates the early findings! We look forward to sharing the results of our needs assessment in 2024.



Another important research initiative was developing an evaluation plan for the e-learning program. This plan entails examining user engagement metrics such as module duration and frequency of utilization, assessing users' confidence in communication and knowledge retention, gauging the relevance of content, and gathering demographic information of users. Initial insights from this evaluation will be disseminated in 2024.

Lastly, our visiting research scholar, Dr. Amanda Bolderston, co-founder of Queering Cancer and a true trailblazer of inclusive cancer care in Canada, performed a research study exploring the experience of SGD staff being out at work to colleagues and patients. The study is now complete and will be submitted for publishing in 2024!



Publications

Bolderston, A., Squires, L., Kennedy, M., & Schulz-Quach, C. (2024). Exploring the Coming Out Experiences of Sexual and Gender Diverse Oncology Healthcare Professionals. To be submitted in 2024.

This study was a collaborative effort led by Amanda Bolderston and included Lauren Squires, Margo Kennedy and Christian Schulz-Quach. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, the study explores how SGD oncology HCPs manage their identity disclosure and the associated consequences within the cis-heteronormative healthcare environment. The findings reveal that participants strategically navigate disclosure based on various contextual factors, including relationships, environment, identity, and assigned meaning. Notably, many participants choose not to disclose their SGD identities, particularly to patients. Overall, the study underscores the imperative to challenge and disrupt cis-heteronormative workplace norms to enhance the workplace experiences of SGD HCPs, allowing them to authentically exist, improve workplace quality of life, and foster improved care and rapport with SGD patients or clients.

Koffman, J., Shapiro, G. K., & Schulz-Quach, C. (2023). Enhancing equity and diversity in palliative care clinical practice, research and education. BMC Palliative Care, 22(1), 64.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12904-023-01185-6>

This editorial included our program director, Christian Schulz-Quach, and program advisor, Gilla Shapiro. The editorial highlights that health disparities in palliative care are preventable outcomes of structural discrimination and marginalization. The editorial stresses the importance of recognizing and fully understanding the multifaceted nature of this problem as the first step toward addressing it. It calls on palliative care clinicians, educators, and researchers to prioritize investigating and mitigating the effects of racial, social, and intersectional injustice in order to improve equitable access and quality of care in palliative settings.

Observerships

This year, the SGDC had the pleasure of hosting Tristan Bilash for an educational observership! Tristan (he/him) is a clinical oncology social worker, writer, international speaker, transgender man and Stage 3C ovarian cancer survivor. Tristan spent the week learning about how the SGDC developed, our e-learning project, QI Study and feedback from patients, spending time with different SGDC team members, meeting with the PM Social Work Team, and sitting in on SGDC patient counseling appointments. He was able to meet one of our PM patient's, also a trans man treated for ovarian cancer. This was an incredibly touching and transformative encounter, a meeting of kindred spirits who shared a truly unique experience. The meeting had an especially profound impact on our patient, who was so validated, heard, and supported at a time when he was feeling especially alone. Tristan's observership concluded with a wonderful presentation to the Princess Margaret Gynecology Department about his experiences as transgender man and ovarian cancer survivor.



We also welcomed Dr. Diego Gardenal Alcantara, a psychiatry resident from Brazil, to our facility! Diego was in the process of establishing a gender diversity clinic in Brazil and visited Toronto to gain insights and observe operations at the SGDC. Throughout his stay, Diego familiarized himself with the development and history of our program, observed our clinical services in action, and was introduced to our newly launched e-learning program. In February 2024, Diego officially launched the commencement of a gender diversity clinic in Brazil!

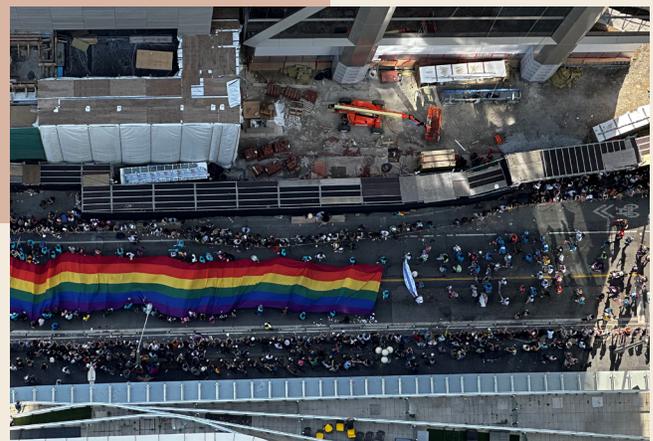


Pride Activities

The SGDc Pride Working Group did a wonderful job bringing Pride to Princess Margaret in 2023. This included:

- Developed a Pride slide show of 9 slides for large TV screens at PM that were shown throughout June
- Attended the UHN Diversity Flag raising
- Overhauled the SGDc website
- Added new books for patient library

The SGDc participated in the Toronto Pride Parade for the second consecutive year in 2023! We had a fantastic turnout with representation from our colleagues at Princess Margaret, UHN Security Operations and the Ontario Institute of Cancer Research. After marching in 2022 and 2023, we are happy to announce that the University Health Network will officially sponsor Pride participation in 2024.



Pride Activities

Be the Light Event

This year we hosted our first ever in-person SGDC patient Pride event called Be the Light! Cancer can be a lonely place, especially during Pride Month. Sometimes, a bit of light and community is needed along the way. We had a heartwarming gathering where SGDC patients and chosen families came together in solidarity and support. Attendees engaged in reflective discussions about healing, cancer treatment, and recovery as the sun set. A Pride meditation guided participants towards inner peace and acceptance, while a collective walk in the labyrinth, illuminated by lanterns and accompanied by live music, symbolized their journey towards healing and unity. It was a lovely evening of pride, connection and community.

Patient Quotes

“It was a beautiful evening filled with poems, songs, and the sharing of powerful stories. It was so humbling to share the space with such lovely individuals and celebrate Pride and healing together as a community.”

“As we learned through song together last night, ‘we are the love, and we are the light’.”



Patient Partners

UHN World Cancer Day Features io ulthiin: Barriers to Cancer Care

io ulthiin identifies as a nonbinary, Indigenous person and is one of our amazing SGDC patient partners. They have been instrumental to our Patient Needs Assessment and was featured in this year's UHN World Cancer Day article. Check out an excerpt from the article below!

io says it's common for marginalized communities to have negative experiences in health care. When io was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma, this became evident.

"Part of the issue with my cancer journey was the fear of doctors and hospitals, which led to me not coming in to get assessed until it was quite late," says io, a member of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

By the time io was diagnosed, their cancer had already progressed to an advanced stage. Thankfully, their prognosis was positive with a 90 per cent chance of recovery. io is now in remission.

"Sometimes people like me will have alienated relationships with their families, so I was doing this totally on my own," io says. *"It was very hard, socially and economically."*

'Access to cancer care is a global concern'

io faced various financial barriers throughout their cancer journey, which forced them to work during their chemotherapy treatments. They struggled to afford the many hidden costs that go along with cancer treatment, such as transportation expenses, drug coverage and over-the-counter medications – along with finding an adequate place to live, and access to healthy food.

"The disconnect between all the different parts of a person's needs undermines the ability to receive proper care," io says. *"The root of the issue needs to be addressed, which are the socially-disabling situations we find ourselves in."*

While io is an example of a marginalized person who caught their cancer on time, and therefore had a favourable outcome, there are many more who cannot say the same.

[Click here to read the full story](#)



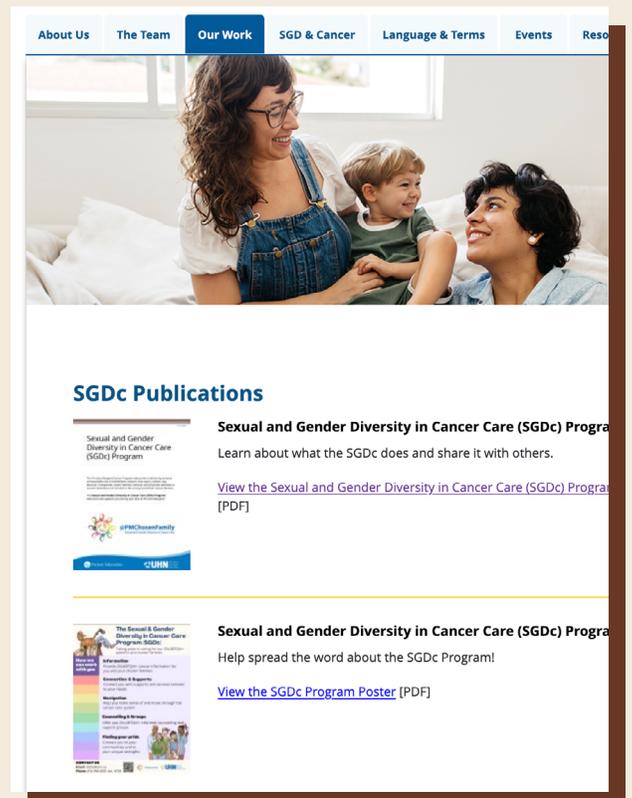
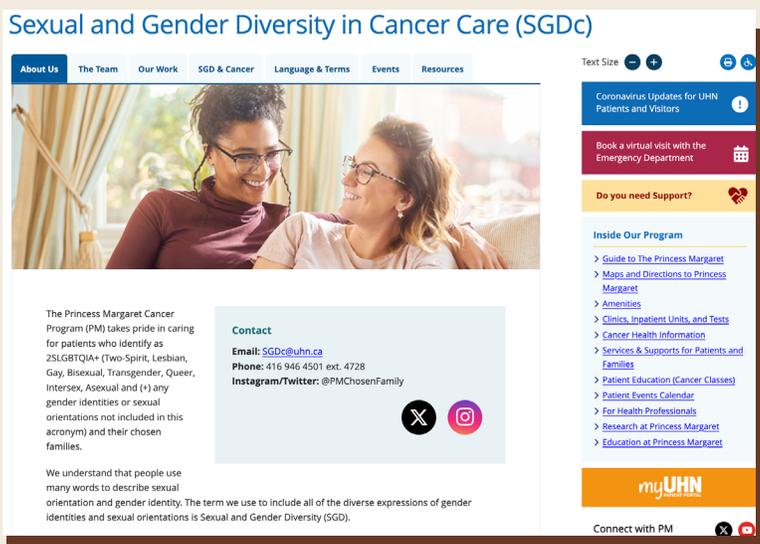
"I am eternally thankful for the SGDC Program which has been instrumental in my journey towards healing. The staff are highly skilled professionals, and also proud members of the LGBT community. The SGDC program provided unwavering support and understanding for a transgender individual like myself and has greatly contributed to my improved well being." - SGDC patient

SGDc Website Updates

This past year, the SGDc website was expanded and restructured. Below are some of the changes that were implemented:

- Reorganized the webpage into a tab format for easier navigation and the ability to add more content
- Full-width banner images using inclusive stock photos
- Shared Pride event photos
- Linked to Pride social media posts
- Created the SGDc Program Brochure – available on the SGDc webpage and EPIC
- Created the SGDc Program Poster – available on webpage
- Shared Needs Assessment Preliminary Findings
- Created Rainbow Breathing Activity resource – available on webpage
- Each year in June, the Community Resource Guide is updated. Check out the website in June for the latest addition!

[Link to website](#)

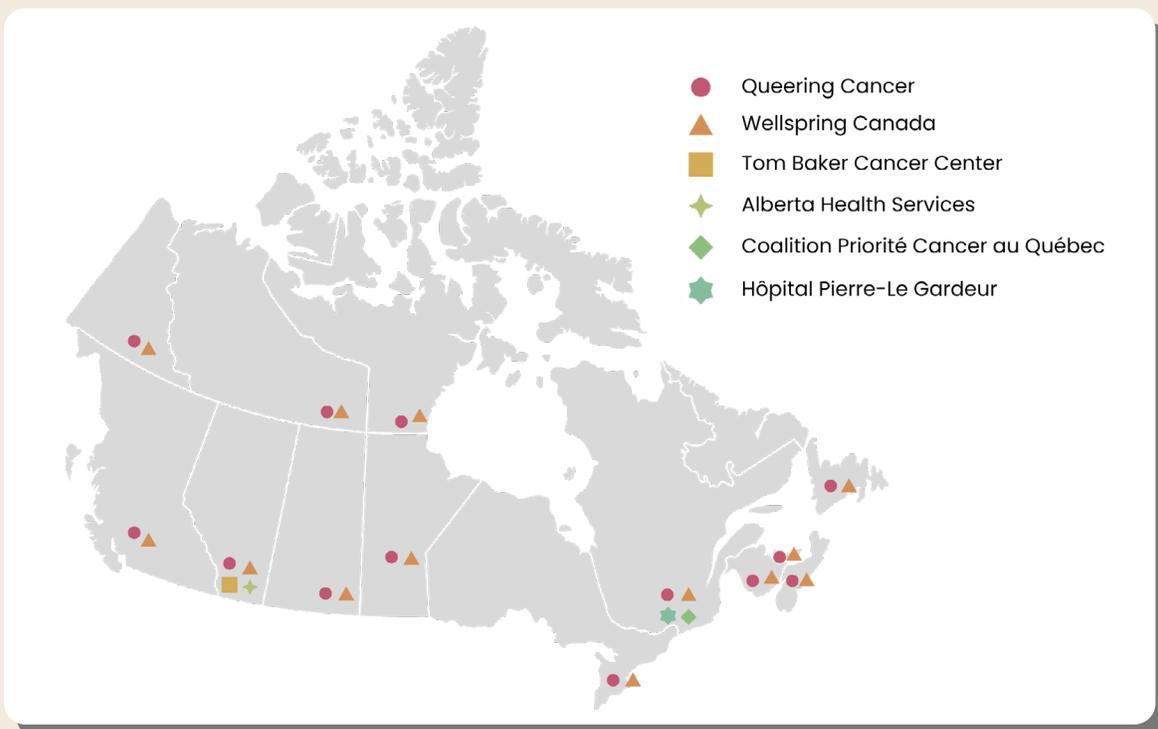


SGDc Community Connections: Partnering for Impact



In 2023, we had the pleasure of strengthening our connection with Dr. Marie-Anne Archambault-Grenier, a hematologist from Hôpital Pierre-Le Gardeur in Montreal, Quebec and a wonderful ally. Marie-Anne contributed to many projects throughout the year, presented with the SGDc at the Canadian Association for Psychosocial Oncology and Coalition Cancer, and translated the entire SGDc e-learning program on her own to ensure that this program could be used by all healthcare providers across Canada. Marie-Anne created an SGDc satellite program at her hospital in Quebec and we look forward to more collaborations in the coming year.

Additionally, the SGDc connected with multiple groups and organizations across Canada in 2023! This included Hôpital Pierre-Le Gardeur, Coalition Priorité Cancer, Alberta Health Services, Tom Baker Cancer Centre as well as national programs such as Queering Cancer and Wellspring.



We are looking forward to continuing our work in 2024, to create inclusive cancer care at the Princess Margaret and within the UHN Cancer Program. We are eager to keep learning, growing and expanding further to make a difference to the patients and chosen families who we care for. Through our passion, community and collaborations, we are transforming cancer care for our communities, together.



Credits:

Text by: Margo Kennedy, Christian Schulz-Quach, and Brendan Lyver

Layout and Design by: Emily Taylor and Brendan Lyver



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[@PMChosenFamily](https://www.instagram.com/PMChosenFamily)