

## Empowering BC Cancer Medical Leaders:

### The BEACON Medical Leadership Program Initiative

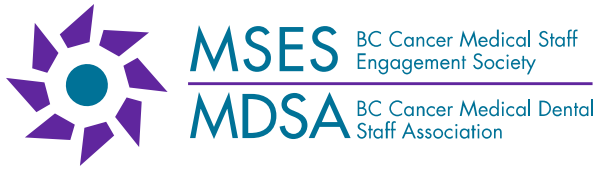
If you haven't heard of this program yet, we are pleased to introduce you to **BEACON**. PHSA launched a transformative 24-month leadership training initiative in March 2024. This program is designed specifically for medical staff, including Physicians, Dentists, Midwives and Nurse Practitioners, within PHSA. We connected with the PHSA lead at BEACON and medical staff participants half-way through their BEACON experience to find out how it's going.



*The first cohort of the BEACON Medical Leadership Program*

Dr. Jeff Pike, Executive Medical Director, Medical Staff Development and Engagement is leading the development of the BEACON program; he shared some insights into the underlying philosophy that informed the foundations of this program and notes some keys that differentiate medical staff from others working in the healthcare space. He emphasized that medical staff are inherently leaders, given their critical decision-making roles with patients and families, and their management of system resources. The program was designed to bridge the gap between the central responsibility medical staff bear for patient outcomes and the leadership required to influence the broader system. The intent is to develop leadership skills even for the many part-time formal leadership roles that medical staff take on alongside their patient care practice; this dual perspective brings unique value.

Dr. Pike highlighted the importance of the continuous learning and improvement that is inherent in medical practice; BEACON aims to harness this forward-looking tendency to generate transformational leaders ready to take on the challenges of the health system. The program emphasizes practical applications of program materials and robust participant



feedback systems. The program includes daily reflections on the integration of Coast Salish teachings and plans to expand learning opportunities through pre/post session content to further support learning and integration.

Looking ahead, Dr. Pike envisions confident medical leaders who are keen to contribute to leadership roles across the entire healthcare system, building a network of peers who can rely on each other for future challenges and decision support.

### **Participant Testimonials**

Five BC Cancer medical staff participants shared what motivated them to apply, the impact BEACON has had on their professional lives, and what they see for their future careers because of their participation:

#### **Dr. Julia Ridley, Provincial Medical Director, Pain and Symptom Management/Palliative Care**

- **Motivation:** The timing was perfect for me. I was just moving into a new leadership position when the first cohort of BEACON started. Although I had some leadership experience in medical education, I needed more training in medical administration. BEACON has been incredibly helpful in this steep learning curve.
- **Impact:** One of the biggest takeaways for me has been understanding my own leadership style—my strengths and weaknesses. Also, learning about the policies and structure of the Health Authority has been invaluable. Knowing where to turn for help within the organization has made a huge difference.
- **Future Influence:** The connections I'm making with my peers and the skills I'm developing in decision-making, conflict management, and project work will definitely carry forward. There's still a lot to learn, but BEACON has given me a solid foundation.

#### **Dr Isabelle Vallieres, Radiation Oncology Department Head Victoria**

- **Motivation:** I felt like I wasn't fully equipped to perform well in my role as Department Head. I had ideas about what needed improvement but lacked the skills and framework to implement them effectively. BEACON seemed like the perfect opportunity to develop those skills.
- **Impact:** I feel like a different person and a different leader now. The most impactful aspect has been the regular time set aside for reflection, education, and discussion. Being part of a small group that meets regularly has allowed us to grow together and tackle deeper, more meaningful questions.
- **Future Influence:** I know I'll keep referring back to the materials and my notes from each session. The network of colleagues I've developed through BEACON will be a

valuable resource. The mentorship aspect has also been incredibly beneficial, and I plan to continue my leadership education in the future.

**Dr. Maura Brown, Medical Lead BC Cancer Planetary Health, and Department Head Medical Imaging Vancouver**

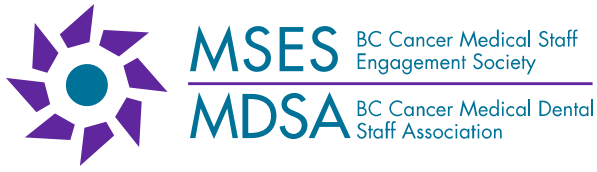
- **Motivation:** I'm passionate about planetary health and recognize that learning from Indigenous worldviews is essential to developing sustainable, climate resilient healthcare. Their deep connection to the land, respect for nature, and holistic view of well-being have important implications for the planet and healthcare. The program's emphasis on leadership skills and integrating Indigenous ways of being into healthcare really drew me to BEACON.
- **Impact:** The structured approach of BEACON, with each module building on the previous one, has been very effective. It began with understanding individual leadership roles within the healthcare system and moved on to practical strategies for leading teams with compassion and effective communication.
- **Future Influence:** The knowledge, skills, and confidence I've gained will be invaluable as I work on collaborative, cross-disciplinary efforts to develop sustainable healthcare solutions. This experience has strengthened my ability to lead with a systems-thinking approach and integrate sustainable practices.

**Dr. Cheryl Ho, Provincial Medical Director, Systemic Therapy Implementation and Sustainment, and Medical Oncology Post-Graduate Fellowship Director.**

- **Motivation:** A colleague encouraged me to sign up, and I was particularly interested in the indigenous-specific anti-racism education. As a mid-career physician, I wanted to connect with like-minded leaders and share insights and problem-solving strategies.
- **Impact:** The most impactful takeaway has been learning about trauma-informed care and experience-informed interactions. It's reminded me to be curious and open-minded about others' life journeys and to be compassionate towards myself as well.
- **Future Influence:** This program will influence my career by weaving Coast Salish teachings into my professional practice. The principles of 'Nuts a maht' (We are one) and 'Tee ma thit' (Do your best) will guide how I present myself to the world and inspire those around me.

**Dr. Suzanne Carlisle, Department Head for Oral Oncology/Dentistry in Abbotsford and Surrey.**

- **Motivation:** I signed up for BEACON to deepen my understanding of healthcare systems and find ways to make a meaningful impact. I wanted to align better with our



organizational mandates and advocate more effectively for our patients and programs. Learning about the PHSA North Star Priorities and connecting with other leaders were also key motivators.

- **Impact:** The most impactful takeaway from my first year in the program is realizing that all leaders face challenges. By recognizing our strengths and areas for growth, we can navigate these challenges more effectively. Sharing obstacles and limitations has helped me refine my leadership skills and develop better strategies to support my team.
- **Future Influence:** This program will have a lasting impact on my career by equipping me with the knowledge and skills to advocate for program improvements and necessary changes. Understanding the healthcare system's limitations has given me the confidence to advocate for our patients and staff more constructively. The program has made me a more confident and capable leader.

If any of the experiences shared resonate with you, or if you have different motivation or interest you can learn more about [BEACON](#) or reach out to the [BEACON team](#) with your questions about the next opportunity to apply.