

## **Lung Diagnostic Assessment Program Outreach Clinic in Napanee, ON Expedites Assessment and Diagnosis for Patients with Lung Cancer**

*First place winner of the Merck Canada and MaRS Lung Cancer Innovation Challenge shares new data demonstrating meaningful improvements in timely access to care for patients with suspected lung cancer.*

KIRKLAND, QC, August 2, 2023/CNWI – Just over two years since challenging Ontario-based innovators to identify solutions to help enhance the lung cancer patient journey by improving timeliness of care, Merck Canada is proud to share new data from the winning team at Kingston Health Sciences Centre (KHSC). The data reveals the far-reaching impact of the first-place solution to expand the Lung Diagnostic Assessment Program (LDAP) with an Outreach Clinic based in the Lennox & Addington County General Hospital (LACGH) in Napanee, Ontario.

The LDAP Outreach Clinic is a rapid assessment clinic run by KHSC for patients with suspected lung cancer in southeastern Ontario, operated by LACGH. Through the outreach clinic, patients referred to the program for evaluation of a suspected diagnosis of lung cancer and who live in Napanee or further west in Ontario now have the opportunity to undergo their first consultation with a respirologist at the LACGH site, removing the need to travel to the KHSC.

Since the LDAP Outreach Clinic launched in November 2021, the program has tangibly improved access to specialized lung cancer care for a growing number of patients in rural Southeastern Ontario.

### **Data on the Impact of the LDAP Outreach Clinic:**

- The LDAP outreach clinic increased LDAP assessment capacity by serving an additional 88 patients (16% of all LDAP-assessed patients in the region).
- Time from LDAP referral to specialist assessment decreased from an average of 22 to 14 days.
- Time from LDAP referral to diagnosis improved from an average of 42 to 29 days for all LDAP-assessed patients, and from 40 to 21 days for patients diagnosed with lung cancer.

Lung and bronchus cancer is the most common cancer, excluding non-melanoma skin cancers, in Canada and the leading cause of cancer death across the country.<sup>1</sup> Symptoms of lung cancer are often unnoticeable at early stages, with approximately half of all lung cancer cases diagnosed at Stage 4, further worsening chances of survival.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, rural populations may experience greater barriers when it comes to accessing health systems and providers, and have higher rates of late-stage lung cancer incidence and mortality compared to urban populations.<sup>3</sup>

“We need to prioritize access to timely, high-quality care for Ontarians with lung cancer, especially for priority patient groups such as rural and lower socioeconomic populations. Our data shows us that it’s possible to bring specialized care to the community and provide care closer to home,” says Dr. Geneviève Digby, Clinical Lead of the LDAP Outreach Clinic. “I’m proud of the team at LACGH for the transformative impact the clinic is making in the region.”

“Removing the barriers that may deter rural residents from accessing the care they need, and the ability to detect lung cancer in earlier stages are important factors in improving patient outcomes,” says Dr. Christopher Parker, Respirologist and Site Lead of the LDAP Outreach Clinic. “So far, we’ve managed to help close the gap between referral and diagnosis by over two weeks for patients diagnosed with lung cancer, and we will continue to identify opportunities to innovate and implement system solutions that help address delays in lung cancer care.”

“I hope the impact we’ve seen so far from the clinic in Napanee encourages health care teams across Ontario to adopt and scale their own community-based care models to better serve the priority lung cancer patient groups in their regions,” says Krista Jones, chief delivery officer at MaRS Discovery District. “Ontario is home to an outstanding class of life-sciences talent with some of the brightest innovators and healthcare workers, and the difference the LDAP Outreach Clinic has already made in the local community is a testament to that. I offer sincere thanks and congratulations to Dr. Digby and her team for answering the call to advance innovative solutions in the lung cancer journey. It’s a wonderful step forward in cancer care in Ontario and demonstrates the crucial impact of Innovation Challenges like these.”

“Every day matters when it comes to cancer and every patient deserves access to timely and quality care,” says Marwan Akar, Managing Director at Merck Canada. “We are thrilled with the success of the LDAP Outreach Clinic as Dr. Digby, Dr. Parker, and their team bring specialized care to lung cancer patients in underserved communities across Southeastern Ontario.”

The clinic received the grand prize of \$100,000 CAD in the Lung Cancer Innovation Challenge from Merck Canada and MaRS Discovery District to support its expansion from KHSC to LACGH. For more information about the Lung Cancer Innovation Challenge: <https://challenges.marsdd.com/challenge/lungcancer/>.

### **Additional Data from the LDAP Clinic**

In 2022, over 120 patients were assessed at the new clinic at LACGH. By providing an additional site for assessment, the LDAP Outreach Clinic has also opened up clinical capacity at the LDAP Clinic in Kingston. Patient travel was reduced by 8,856 km, an average of 73.2 km/patient, and patient out-of-pocket expenses saved totaled \$5,755.60, an average of \$47.60/patient, due to reduced travel and parking expenses. Accounting for physician travel from Kingston to Napanee, total driving saved was 5,688 km, for a total CO2 emissions savings of about 1.9 tonnes.

### **About Merck**

At Merck, known as MSD outside of the United States and Canada, we are unified around our purpose: We use the power of leading-edge science to save and improve lives around the world. For more than 130 years, we have brought hope to humanity through the development of important medicines and vaccines. We aspire to be the premier research-intensive biopharmaceutical company in the world – and today, we are at the forefront of research to deliver innovative health solutions that advance the prevention and treatment of diseases in people and animals. We foster a diverse and inclusive global workforce and operate responsibly every day to enable a safe, sustainable and healthy future for all people and communities. For more information about our operations in Canada, visit [www.merck.ca](http://www.merck.ca) and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter @MerckCanada](#).

### **Merck’s Commitment to Oncology**

To help achieve a world where patients no longer fear a cancer diagnosis, Merck works to deliver innovative solutions that improve lives and contribute to making more tomorrows possible. From the latest advancements in immuno-oncology to our pipeline of innovative medicines, we are working every day to help transform the way cancer is treated and ensure these solutions are accessible to the patients who need them most. Knowing this goes beyond medicine, we work with the entire oncology community to address barriers along the patient journey and discover how the different touchpoints intersect with the needs and lifestyles of patients. We approach our work from a holistic standpoint – one that goes beyond treatment and uses our collective passion and expertise to help improve the lives of Canadians.

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## REFERENCES

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Cancer Society. Lung and Bronchus cancer statistics. Accessed on July 5, 2023. Available at: <https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/lung/statistics>.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Cancer Society. Canadian Cancer Statistics: A 2020 special report on lung cancer. Accessed on July 5, 2023. Available at: <https://cdn.cancer.ca/-/media/files/cancer-information/resources/publications/2020-canadian-cancer-statistics-special-report/2020-canadian-cancer-statistics-special-report-en.pdf#:~:text=Lung%20cancer%20is%20projected%20to,of%20all%20types%20of%20cancer>.

<sup>3</sup> Jenkins WD, Matthews AK, Bailey A, et al. Rural areas are disproportionately impacted by smoking and lung cancer. Preventive medicine reports 2018. Accessed on July 5, 2023. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5984228/>.

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