

Delay in cancer centre expansion may derail Ontario project

The Hamilton Regional Cancer Centre may move to a new location because of plans proposed by the Hamilton Health Sciences Corporation (HHSC) to remove acute care services from the Henderson General Hospital.

The centre had originally planned to build a \$45-million addition to its present site beside the Henderson, which it relies on for diagnostic and emergency services. However, Dr. George Browman, head of the cancer centre, says uncertainty surrounding the Henderson's medical role has forced the centre to look at alternative sites. Browman says there's a lot at stake because local patients are already being sent to hospitals in Buffalo and Thunder Bay, Ont., for treatment.

The HHSC includes the McMaster Medical Centre and the Hamilton General, Henderson and Chedoke hospitals. Browman said earlier that the de-

lay was not affecting operations at the centre, but that it had affected morale. The longer the delay continues, he says, the more impact it will have on cancer centre patients. "If there are any delays or ambiguities about the siting issue, there is a risk that getting the cancer centre expansion back on track could be significantly delayed."

Facilities aren't the only shortfall in cancer care. According to Dr. Tom McGowan, head of radiation therapy with Cancer Care Ontario, an agency of the provincial government, staffing of the province's regional cancer centres is also a problem. "Everything regarding waiting times and our ability to treat people is tied directly to our ability to recruit. We need to have people here as fully functional radiation staff." The Toronto radiation oncologist says the most serious situations are in Toronto, Hamilton and

London, Ont. Three new centres, in Peel, Durham and Kitchener-Waterloo, are being built.

Dr. Anthony Whitton, head of radiation oncology and chair of the radiation program at the Hamilton centre, says there are staff and treatment unit limitations. "We are not able to run all the units that we have because of a lack of therapists. If we didn't have [the ability to re-refer to other cancer centres], then our waiting times would be very long. We've sent about 160 [patients] since this re-referral started." He worries that sending patients away adds to their stress.

Ted Wheatley, president of Ontario Division of the Canadian Cancer Society, agrees. "It's shameful that cancer patients are being asked to shoulder the stress of having to cope with an inadequate cancer treatment system." — *Ken Kilpatrick, Hamilton*

CMA Online manager honoured

Ann Bolster, the CMA's associate director of online services and a former managing editor at *CMAJ*, has been named a fellow of the 4000-member American Medical Writers Association (AMWA). There are roughly 130 AMWA fellows; the list includes former *BMJ* editor Stephen Lock and former *CMAJ* editor Bruce Squires. Bolster has held almost every position in AMWA's Canadian chapter and served on the Board of Directors. AMWA helps people enhance their communication skills in the biomedical area. Through the Canada Chapter, Bolster has organized seminars, workshops and conferences for writers and editors. She has also designed courses for physicians attending annual meetings of the Royal College. — *Caryn Hirschhorn, CMAJ*

Canadians run Kosovo clinics



Captain Tom Hurley, medical officer with the Royal Canadian Regiment, treats a patient in the mountain community of Gradica, Kosovo. Canadian soldiers have been in Kosovo for 8 months, and although the main job of the medical team is to care for these 1400 troops, it also visits civilian clinics, travelling via armoured personnel carrier. At the clinics, which rotate among villages in need, Hurley dispenses drugs donated by *Pharmaciens sans Frontières*. The clinics are a volunteer effort, with everyone from doctors to ambulance drivers donating their time. Hurley thinks the clinics play a crucial role because no established family or preventive medicine has been practised in many parts of Kosovo for 7 or 8 years. "Some of the people we see here have diseases that would be easily treated in Canada, but here there is only so much we can do." — *Lieutenant-Commander Jacques Fauteux, Kosovo*