

When Answers Are Everything

2002/03 – 2005/06 SUMMARY REPORT



CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE

CARREFOUR VIRTUEL CANADIEN
DES SOINS PALLIATIFS

www.virtualhospice.ca
www.carrefourpalliatif.ca

MISSION

TO ENHANCE AND FACILITATE ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT FOR CANADIANS WITH LIFE-THREATENING ILLNESSES, THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS; HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS, VOLUNTEERS AND RESEARCHERS, THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE, INTERNET-BASED NETWORK.

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Why a Canadian Virtual Hospice?

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IN SIMPLEST TERMS, the Canadian Virtual Hospice is a network of information and support related to death and dying. But, for the people who find reassurance, new understanding and a feeling that they are not alone in difficult times, this online community is so much more.

www.virtualhospice.ca was born out of the recognition that palliative care services in Canada are very often fragmented, with regional disparities and marked differences in the care available in urban centres compared to rural or northern communities. Palliative care, with its focus on providing comfort during the final stages of life, will only become more relevant as Canada's population ages. According to Statistics Canada, the proportion of seniors in the overall population has grown from one in twenty in 1921, to one in eight in 2001. By 2041, nearly one in four Canadians will be aged 65 or older. This aging population is sure to intensify the pressure placed upon our hospice and palliative care services. At the same time, Canadians of all ages are becoming increasingly familiar with the philosophy of palliative care and have heightened expectations for comprehensive, quality end-of-life services in their own homes and communities.

www.virtualhospice.ca is an innovative response to these palliative care realities. Created by Canadians, for Canadians, this bilingual website overcomes the challenges of distance and geography, providing equal access to palliative care resources and health care professionals while taking full advantage of current technology. The overriding goals are to provide accurate, timely health information and to introduce Canadians with similar experiences to each other. Like a hospice made of bricks and mortar, we provide information and support for physical, emotional and spiritual concerns related to death and dying.

Imagine that you are the parent, brother, sister or child of someone who is seriously ill. Consider the value of the Canadian Virtual Hospice when:

- you are feeling overwhelmed and confused that a loved one will not eat, but reading about loss of appetite in Symptoms of Illness at www.virtualhospice.ca gives you a new understanding of some of the physical changes that are taking place, allaying your fears and allowing you to focus on making the most of the time you have left together
- you are worried that a family member with irregular breathing is suffering so you submit a question to Ask a Professional at www.virtualhospice.ca and learn from our health care team that certain breathing patterns are expected as death nears and do not necessarily indicate pain or suffering
- you have just learned there is no treatment to extend the life of someone you care about, so you turn to the Bulletin Board at www.virtualhospice.ca and find solace in the words of other Canadians who respond to your question about coping

Sometimes answers to questions like these hold great significance, especially for those who are concerned about the well-being of a loved one, but are hesitant or unsure about how to help. It's not only patients, family members and friends who are drawing upon the Canadian Virtual Hospice. Canadian health care professionals are spreading the word among their peers that access to expert opinion on palliative care is available at www.virtualhospice.ca. Physicians, nurses and other health care providers are coming to Ask a Professional to be sure that they are providing the very best care for their patients.





Thank you so much for not just
the information but your
kindness
in answering
me so promptly.

Thank you again - I only wish I had the words
to fully express how much this means.



The theme When Answers Are Everything seemed appropriate for this summary report, given the feedback we have received from Canadians stressing that www.virtualhospice.ca makes an important contribution at a difficult time of life. You will see some of that feedback throughout this report.

As Chair and Executive Director of the Canadian Virtual Hospice, we are privileged to be involved in a national initiative that holds such meaning for Canadians. We have recently renewed our funding partnership with the Government of Manitoba, which will assist the Canadian Virtual Hospice in developing its long-term vision. With this financial commitment, the first order of business is to ensure that more Canadians know about us so that they may benefit from the resources we have to offer. The second is to consider new opportunities for collaboration and expansion of our resources. The Internet is a dynamic environment and the Canadian Virtual Hospice intends to embrace innovation to ensure that Canadians have the best possible access to the tools that may better equip them to deal with life-threatening illness and loss.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the contribution of Anita Stern, former Co-Chair of the Canadian Virtual Hospice. Anita's vision and commitment to creating an interactive space for those touched by life-threatening illness or loss were inspiring to everyone involved in this project. Thank you, Anita for your tireless support.

Harvey Max Chochinov, OM, FRSC
Chair, Canadian Virtual Hospice

Josette Bérard, BA, MPA
Executive Director, Canadian Virtual Hospice



Thank you so much for your quick reply. My anxiety has been reduced immensely...

Your site is an immense

**help and
comfort**

to me.



Who We Are

WWW.VIRTUALHOSPICE.CA IS A bilingual resource offered at no charge to all Canadians. It is an interactive network of information and support for people dealing with life-threatening illness and loss.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice went online in 2004, after three years of planning and development. Led by Co-Chairs Anita Stern in Hamilton and Dr. Harvey Chochinov in Winnipeg, the launch of www.virtualhospice.ca was the result of collaboration among leading Canadian palliative care clinicians, academics and researchers.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice is managed by an Executive Director and staffed by a health care team, including palliative care physicians and clinical nurse specialists.

The National Advisory Committee, made up of health care professionals from around the country, provides regular feedback and input to the management team.

Funded initially by Western Economic Diversification Canada, Manitoba Health, Riverview Health Centre in Winnipeg and, Health Canada's Office of Health and the Information Highway, the Canadian Virtual Hospice also received administrative and in-kind support from CancerCare Manitoba and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Recently, the Manitoba Government has made significant financial contributions through Manitoba Health and Manitoba Energy, Science and Technology.

What We Do

PROVIDE ANSWERS WHEN ANSWERS ARE EVERYTHING

PALLIATIVE CARE IS an approach to care which focuses on comfort and quality of life for those who are affected by life-threatening illness. Its goal is much more than comfort in dying, however. Palliative care is about living, through meticulous attention to symptom control and efforts to maximize day-to-day functioning.

As illness progresses, most people face numerous physical, psychosocial and spiritual challenges and may at times feel confused, fearful and uncertain. Meeting the emotional needs of the patient, as well as the physical needs, is a key component of palliative care. Everyone approaches the end of life differently, but research (*Singer, P.*) has shown that most people have similar concerns, including:

- receiving adequate pain and symptom management
- avoiding inappropriate prolongation of dying
- achieving a sense of control
- relieving burden on others
- strengthening relationships with loved ones

Each one of these concerns raises a number of questions, not only from patients, but also from family members and friends. Not surprisingly, these questions don't always come to mind at an opportune time, when everyone is thinking clearly and a health care professional is on hand. Yet, the need for information and support is palpable. When answers are everything, www.virtualhospice.ca is there to help.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice provides answers several different ways, starting with Ask a Professional. This web-based service allows anyone, from patient to health care professional, to put questions to Canadian Virtual Hospice palliative care experts. The health care team provides insightful, detailed responses to these questions, often on the same day the questions are received.

Frequently Asked Questions is a collection of questions drawn from the experiences of palliative care doctors and nurses. The questions and answers can be searched by category or by keyword, helping users zero in on the right answer. Frequently Asked Questions enables patients, family members and friends to access information on common questions at any time of the day or night.

The Information sections cover clinical, psychosocial and spiritual matters, providing a level of detail not often found on health care sites targeted at consumers. Topics dealing with symptoms of illness, such as pain, shortness of breath, and dehydration provide the latest treatment options and can be used to improve discussions with the local health care team. For example, after reading the information on the site, patients and family members may gain an understanding of why certain symptoms develop, so that they can better understand why some treatments are more appropriate than others. The site's powerful search engine identifies and conveniently sorts all the resources available on www.virtualhospice.ca.

In its first two years of operations, the Canadian Virtual Hospice received more than 69,000 visits.

I am just so lucky to have found this site,
as it has helped me to
answer questions
I have concerning my grandmother.



THE MOST FREQUENT USERS OF ASK A PROFESSIONAL ARE:

- health care professionals asking about their patients
- ordinary Canadians asking about family members

CREATE A COMMUNITY

THE CREATORS OF the Canadian Virtual Hospice were very deliberate in their efforts to make www.virtualhospice.ca a place where Canadians could gather and share their experiences. Many Canadians feel uncomfortable talking about death and dying, inadvertently increasing the sense of isolation people directly affected by illness experience. In addition to providing reliable information, the purpose of the Canadian Virtual Hospice is to connect people with others who are dealing with similar circumstances and understand just how they feel.

It is striking how people use the Bulletin Board and Online Chat to seek out people who have been in similar situations. They may be surrounded by people who love and care for them, but ultimately, they feel a need to connect with people in like circumstances. In addition, people may feel freer revealing their feelings online because of the anonymity and sense of emotional safety that comes from speaking with virtual friends. Providing the forum for these connections and discussions is the role of www.virtualhospice.ca. As awareness of this resource increases, these interactive areas are expected to see significant increases in traffic.

The Virtual Hospice health care team has noted that relationship-building among clinicians and researchers is one of the unexpected results from Ask a Professional. The health care team acts as a hub, connecting Canadian health care professionals with each other, sometimes leading to new collaboration in palliative care.

Members of the health care team take care to ensure the Canadian Virtual Hospice has a presence in the health care community across the country. For example, members of the multidisciplinary team attend professional palliative care conferences, make presentations about their work and have tapped into tele-health networks in order to increase the profile of the Canadian Virtual Hospice among health care professionals.



Thank you so much for your speedy response!

You have really helped me to

narrow my focus

and concentrate on what is most important for this client.

DELIVER EXCELLENCE AND EFFICIENCY

THE CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE

is committed to providing reliable health information. The information on the site has been developed by palliative care specialists and is accurate, straightforward and accessible. Information for Patients covers the potential causes of physical symptoms, lists potential tests that may be required, provides questions the doctor is likely to ask, examines the potential treatments and discusses strategies to deal with symptoms. The information provided to health care professionals through Ask a Professional is detailed, drawing upon recent health care research and often including a list of resources for health care providers to review themselves.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice approach of acting as a hub for all Canadians with questions about palliative care has the potential to be a model for many other disciplines. Although consumers can find doctors working online to answer their health questions, to date these services are largely generalist in nature. Providing expert consultations for both health care professionals and consumers on one site is still a novel approach in health care.

Receiving viewpoints and input from users is one means of measuring performance. Everyone who sends a question to Ask a Professional receives a follow-up e-mail with several survey questions. In this way, user satisfaction can be easily monitored and the health care team can quickly adapt as a result of the feedback provided. Overall satisfaction with Ask a Professional stands at 95 per cent, representing a great achievement for the website's health care team.

In addition, the Canadian Virtual Hospice National Advisory Committee, made up of health care professionals from around the country, ensures that regional perspectives are part of the decision-making and evaluation process.

ASK A PROFESSIONAL MEETING USER NEEDS

95% are satisfied with the response received from Ask a Professional

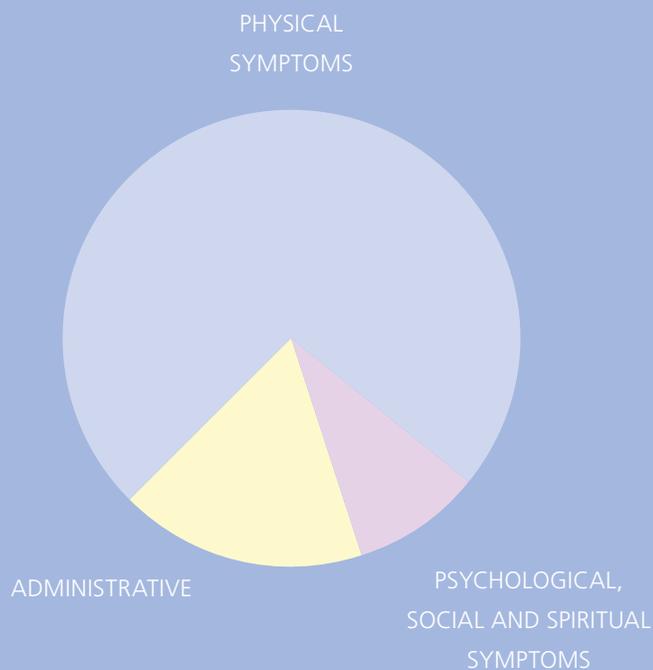
87% agree the answer helps in understanding the issues

83% agree the answer will help, or has helped, with making decisions

I hope that when you end your day from work,
you know that you are doing something that

reaches
someone's soul.

WHAT DO CANADIANS WANT TO KNOW?



The majority of questions submitted
to Ask a Professional relate to some aspect
of a patient's physical well-being.

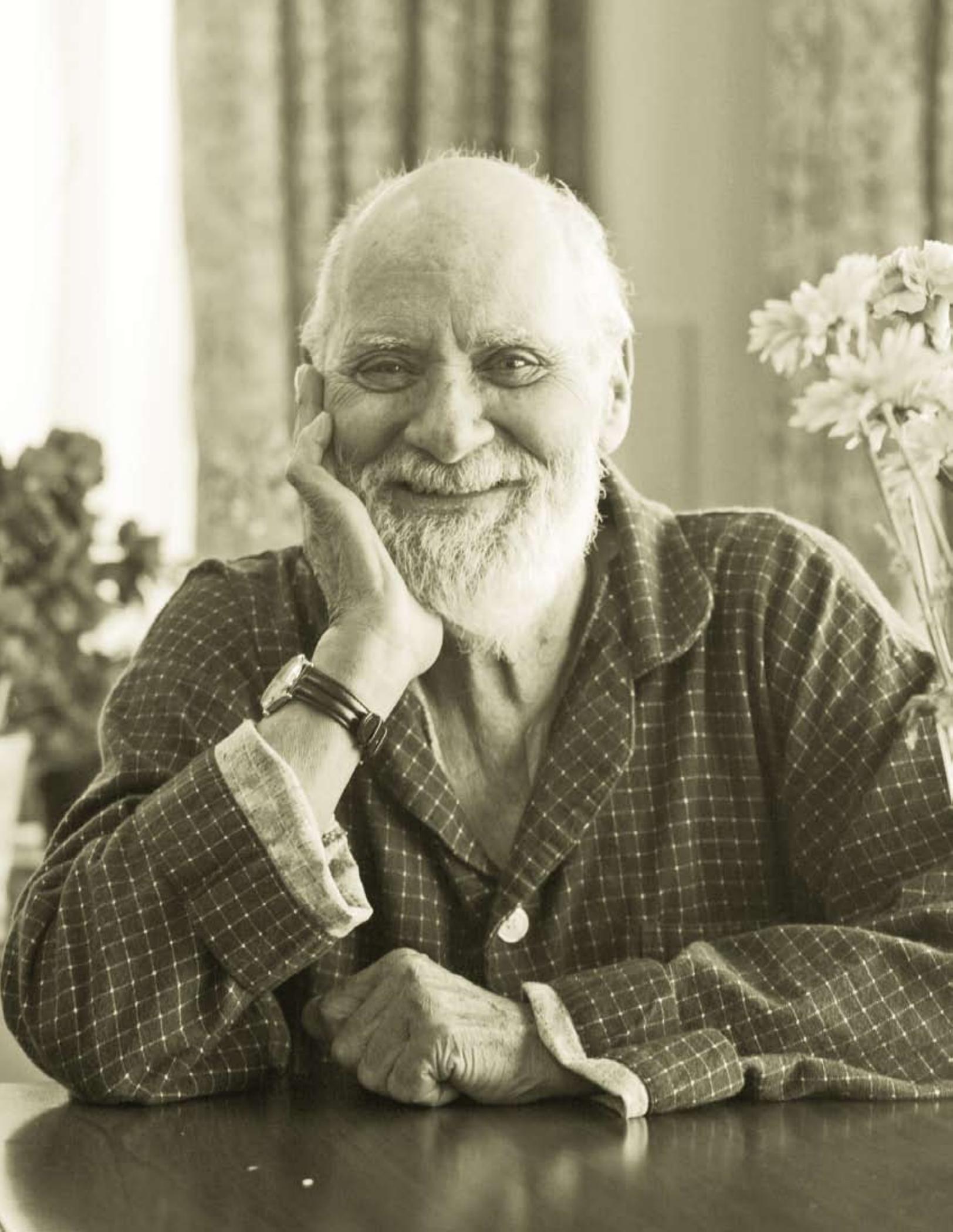
CARE FOR EACH OTHER

THE CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE epitomizes a cherished component of the Canadian identity: our capacity to care for each other. While the demand for palliative care by Canadians nearing the end of their lives is increasing, there is often no system of comprehensive care in smaller, northern and remote communities, whether that means hospices, palliative care beds in hospitals or health care supports provided in the home. www.virtualhospice.ca is one means of beginning to address these inequalities, providing all Canadians with access to information and support through one common gateway.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice helps people care for each other in many different ways, in a variety of settings. For example, the site supports Canadians who are caring for a dying family member at home by providing appropriate clinical, psychosocial and spiritual information, supports family members who want to increase their knowledge and confidence before speaking with their local health care teams, and supports health care professionals who want to ensure that they are meeting the highest standards of care. The Canadian Virtual Hospice does not attempt to replace existing health care, but works to complement existing resources.

As Canada's population ages and existing resources are stretched to meet the needs of increasing numbers of people requiring palliative care, the services of www.virtualhospice.ca will ensure that Canadians always have somewhere to go for a reassuring word or trustworthy information.





Where We're Going

The Canadian Virtual Hospice is pleased to be associated with many other organizations working to ensure that Canadians are leaders in the field of palliative care. Whether educating future health care professionals or consumers of health care, Canada has some of the most impassioned champions of palliative care in the world. By developing creative partnerships, the Canadian Virtual Hospice expects that the technological strengths of www.virtualhospice.ca can be successfully paired with the content needs identified by partners. Some of these partnership projects include:

- Hosting the Canadian Palliative Care Researcher Database, through the leadership and support of Health Canada's Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care
- Providing an online meeting place for the Task Group on Volunteer Best Practices and Quality, with the support of Health Canada's Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care
- Working with Health Canada's Secretariat on Palliative and End-of-Life Care, Pallium, the Canadian Hospice and Palliative Care Association, and Educating Future Physicians in Palliative and End-of-Life Care, among others, to coordinate the availability of online palliative care resources for health care professionals

In looking to the future, the challenge for the Canadian Virtual Hospice is to ensure that the site provides information and support while closely meeting the needs of a diverse audience – not only patients and their friends and families, but also health care professionals, volunteers and researchers. Recently, the Canadian Virtual Hospice has conducted research examining opportunities to meet the needs of dying children, their families and friends, and children facing the death of a loved one.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice is continually working to make www.virtualhospice.ca more robust. And, if the job is done well, two emerging trends identified in distinct bodies of research mean that Canadians will make use of the service: first, people prefer to remain at home in the final stages of life, making the need for supplemental health information even more vital; and second, Internet use by health consumers is growing, making Canadians more likely to seek out that supplemental health information online. These trends, taken with Canada's aging population, mean that the Canadian Virtual Hospice can be expected to perform an increasingly important support role for Canadians in the years ahead.



Financial Statements

NOTICE TO READER

I have compiled the statement of financial position of Canadian Virtual Hospice as at March 31, 2006 and the statement of operations for the year then ended from information provided by management. I have not audited, reviewed or otherwise attempted to verify the accuracy or completeness of such information. Readers are cautioned that these statements may not be appropriate for their purposes.



Jeanne Krahn-Matthewson
Chartered Accountant
Winnipeg, Manitoba

August 29, 2006

CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE
 STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31,
 (UNAUDITED - SEE NOTICE TO READER)

	2006	2005	2004	2003
Revenue				
Contributions				
Manitoba Health	\$ 282,687	\$ 150,737	\$ 90,366	\$ -
Riverview Health Centre	771	76,297	7,273	80,823
Western Economic Diversification	-	64,354	154,259	270,578
Health Canada	-	-	9,999	-
Other	5,000	-	1,985	-
	288,458	291,388	263,882	351,401
Expenses				
Salaries and benefits	187,329	189,591	98,725	8,990
Marketing	68,673	20,366	29,661	442
Website costs	17,106	71,751	109,336	324,340
Administration expenses	10,200	5,526	4,867	1,814
Professional fees	2,001	3,072	18,651	10,000
Research	1,326	-	-	-
Travel	1,310	108	-	-
Committee costs	513	974	2,642	5,815
	288,458	291,388	263,882	351,401
Excess of revenues over expenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -

CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE
 STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
 MARCH 31,
 (UNAUDITED - SEE NOTICE TO READER)

	2006	2005	2004	2003
Assets				
Current				
Advances	\$ 21,702	\$ 23,037	99,480	67,949
Prepaid expense	-	-	917	2,044
	21,702	23,037	100,397	69,993
Fixed assets				
Computer equipment	14,965	14,965	14,965	7,163
Accumulated amortization	(14,965)	(12,365)	(7,376)	(2,387)
Net book value	-	2,600	7,589	4,776
	\$ 21,702	\$ 25,637	\$ 107,986	\$ 74,769
Liabilities				
Current				
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ -	\$ 565	\$ -	\$ 2,463
Deferred contributions	21,702	22,472	100,397	67,530
	21,702	23,037	100,397	69,993
Net assets				
Investment in fixed assets	-	2,600	7,589	4,776
Unrestricted	-	-	-	-
	-	2,600	7,589	4,776
	\$ 21,702	\$ 25,637	\$ 107,986	\$ 74,769

CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE
 NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
 MARCH 31, 2006
 (UNAUDITED - SEE NOTICE TO READER)

1. Nature of operations

The Canadian Virtual Hospice is a national web-based initiative which provides bilingual information and support to palliative care patients, their families and friends, health care professionals and volunteers. Conceived in 2001, the web-site was officially launched in February 2004.

The Canadian Virtual Hospice operates, both administratively and financially, under the auspices of CancerCare Manitoba and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

2. Significant accounting policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles and reflect the following significant accounting policies :

a) Fixed assets

Fixed assets are recorded at cost. Amortization of fixed assets is computed using the straight-line method at rates calculated to amortize the cost of the assets less their residual values over their estimated useful lives. The following annual rates have been applied as follows:

Computer equipment	33%
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b) Revenue recognition

Contributions are recognized when the recoverable costs are incurred as per the contribution agreements.

Contributions of supplies and services that would otherwise have been purchased are recorded at fair value at the date of the contribution.

c) Deferred contributions

Deferred contributions represent operating funding relating to expenses of future years.

e) Use of estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts of assets and liabilities and disclosures of contingent assets and liabilities at the date of the financial statements and the reported amounts of revenue and expenses during the reporting period. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

3. Economic dependence

Canadian Virtual Hospice derives a significant proportion of its contributions from Manitoba Health and Manitoba Energy Science and Technology. The following funding has been committed for the year ended March 31, 2007.

Manitoba Energy Science and Technology	\$ 331,000
Manitoba Health	306,263
	<hr/>
	\$ 637,263

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Canadian Virtual Hospice gratefully acknowledges the contributions of our funding partners and extends our deepest thanks for their support and commitment to the project.

In the four-year period covered in this report, several organizations invested more than \$100,000 each to support the efforts of the Canadian Virtual Hospice, as shown below:



The Canadian Virtual Hospice is also grateful for the administrative and in-kind support received from CancerCare Manitoba and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority.

Finally, the Canadian Virtual Hospice is indebted to Senator Sharon Carstairs for her leadership in palliative care and her invaluable assistance in the establishment of www.virtualhospice.ca.

CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE TEAM MEMBERS (2002/03 – 2005/06)

Management Committee

Dr. Harvey Max Chochinov, Chair
Anita Stern, former Co-Chair
Josette Bérard, Executive Director
Dr. Mike Harlos, Physician Consultant
Lorena McManus, WRHA Liaison/Representative

Clinical Nurse Specialists

Alexandra Beel
Brenda Peters-Watral
Simone Stenekes
Suzanne Wowchuk

Physician Consultants

Dr. Garnet Crawford
Dr. Joshua Shadd

CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE
NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Harvey Max Chochinov, OM, FRSC
Canadian Virtual Hospice Chair
Canada Research Chair in Palliative Care
Professor, Dept. of Psychiatry and Family Medicine
(Division of Palliative Care), University of Manitoba
Director, Manitoba Palliative Care Research Unit
CancerCare Manitoba

Anita Stern, MScN, PhD (candidate)
Former Canadian Virtual Hospice Co-Chair
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Associate Investigator, System-linked Research Unit
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

Josette Bérard, BA, MPA
Executive Director, Canadian Virtual Hospice
Winnipeg, Manitoba

G. Michael Downing, MD
Medical Director, Victoria Hospice Society
Clinical Assistant Professor, UBC
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Palliative Medicine Consultant, BC Cancer Agency
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Physicians
Adjunct Assistant Professor, UVic School
of Health Information Sciences

Serge Dumont, PhD
Professeur, École de service social
Pavillon Charles De-Koninck
Université Laval
Québec

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Senior Research Associate, Division of Palliative
Medicine
Alberta Cancer Board Palliative Care Research
Initiative
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Edmonton, Alberta

Gerri Frager RN, MD, FRCPC (term: 2001-2006)
Medical Director Pediatric Palliative Care Service,
IWK Health Centre
Assistant Professor Dalhousie University
Halifax, Nova Scotia
Faculty Scholar Alumnus, OSI's Project
Death in America

Pierre R. Gagnon, MD, FRCPC
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Professeur adjoint, Faculté de Pharmacie,
Université Laval
Quebec, Quebec

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British Columbia
Clinical Professor, Department of Family Practice

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Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Medical Director, St. Boniface Hospital Palliative
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Section Head, Palliative Care, Dept. of Family
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Professor, University of Manitoba,
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Canada Research Chair in eHealth Innovation
Chief Innovator and Founder, Centre for Global
eHealth Innovation
Professor, Depts. of Health Policy, Management
and Evaluation, and Anesthesia
University Health Network and University
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Director: The Temmy Latner Center for Palliative
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Professor, Dept. of Family and Community
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Jose Luis Pereira, MBChB, DA, CCFP
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Foothills Medical Centre
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Robin Weir, RN, PhD (term: 2001-2005)
Investigator, Community Linked Evaluation Aids
Research Unit (C.L.E.A.R.)
Associate Investigator, System-Linked Research
Unit
Professor Emeritus, School of Nursing, McMaster
University
Hamilton, Ontario
Director, Research Institute, Bridgepoint Health,
Toronto, Ontario



NETWORK OF INFORMATION
AND SUPPORT

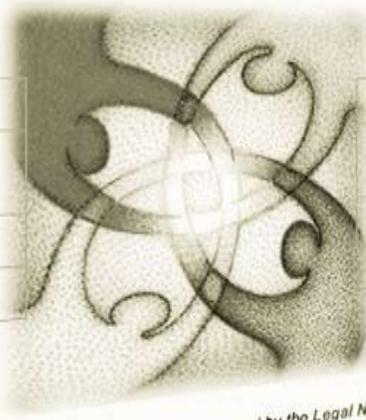
Canadian Virtual Hospice is an interactive network for people dealing with life-threatening illness and loss.



CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE
CARREFOUR VIRTUEL CANADIEN
DES SOINS PALLIATIFS

Learn more about us.

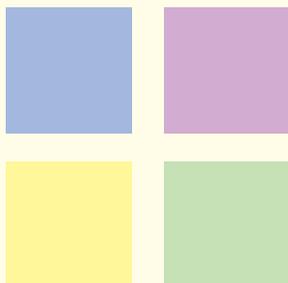
- > I am a patient.
- > I am a friend / family member of a patient.
- > I am a health care professional
- > I am a volunteer.



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CANADIAN VIRTUAL HOSPICE
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Cette information est disponible en français