



News Release
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Revolutionary CAR T Therapy Now Available for Patients with Specific Cancers in Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan patients with specific cancers can now receive an innovative type of immunotherapy closer to home. The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (Cancer Agency), along with the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA), is launching the revolutionary Chimeric Antigen Receptor T-cell (CAR T) therapy to treat adult cancer patients with certain blood cancers and lymphomas in the province.

“We are pleased to now offer this revolutionary CAR T therapy in Saskatchewan, so that patients no longer need to travel out of province to take advantage of this potentially life-saving treatment,” Saskatchewan Cancer Agency President and CEO Deb Bulych said. “This exciting announcement would not be possible without the steadfast support from the Government of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Health Authority and our health system partners.”

“Saskatchewan is now one of five provinces in Canada that has this new treatment option available to cancer patients closer to home,” Health Minister Paul Merriman said. “We are committed to providing Saskatchewan people with quick, convenient access to the highest quality care and new treatment options available.”

The Government of Saskatchewan has provided initial funding of \$2.128M to develop a commercial CAR T program and will provide an estimated \$6.7M annually to operate the program and fund the cost of treatment for patients.

The CAR T therapy program, available in Saskatoon, includes collecting a patient’s T-cells (a type of immune system cell) from their blood and then engineering them with genetic material to recognize and attack cancer cells. Those cells are multiplied and then infused back into the patient where they can get to work destroying the cancer cells in their body.

“Offering CAR T therapy availability in Saskatchewan allows patients to rapidly access treatment closer to home and provides better access to follow-up visits and ongoing support from their care team throughout the treatment process,” said Sharon Garratt, Saskatchewan Health Authority Vice President. “The SHA is excited to provide our expertise to support this leading edge treatment.”

Establishing a CAR T therapy in Saskatchewan has involved the expertise and commitment of the Saskatchewan Stem Cell Transplant and Cellular Therapy Program (SCTCTP) team at the Cancer Agency and the SHA, as well as partners in neurology, ICU and others.

“This new therapy option is giving hope to some patients who are not responding to existing treatment or have already exhausted all other conventional treatment options available to them,” Saskatchewan Cancer Agency Hematologist, Dr. Mark Bosch said. “CAR T is still a relatively new process, but it is already showing promising results for patients around the world and right here in Saskatchewan, who have travelled elsewhere to receive the treatment.”

Saskatchewan patient, Gary Carriere, was diagnosed with lymphoma in March 2020. He underwent several rounds of chemotherapy and a stem cell transplant, which controlled his cancer for a short time, until it came back aggressively the following year. He traveled to Montreal alone in November 2022 to receive CAR T—the last treatment option available to him.

“It was very lonely and isolating to be far from home—in a different hospital and province—without my wife and family at my side while undergoing this new major procedure,” Carriere said. “It is such a relief to hear that future patients will not have to make that long, exhausting journey and can receive CAR T right here in our own backyard.

When you are facing a scary prognosis and this new therapy is your last real hope for recovery, being in a familiar place, surrounded by the people you love most, can make all the difference in the world.”

Carriere is grateful to be now cancer-free thanks to the new CAR T therapy.

“Many of our patients express the same wish—to have more days to enjoy with their loved ones. This new treatment could help grant many more healthy days to some patients, and we can’t imagine a better gift than that precious time,” Bulych said.

About the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency (Cancer Agency) is a provincial healthcare organization with a legislated mandate to provide compassionate cancer care for the people of Saskatchewan. Their dedicated teams provide safe and supportive patient and family-centered care at their two cancer centres in Regina and Saskatoon (Allan Blair Cancer Centre and Saskatoon Cancer Centre), as well as in rural communities in partnership with hospitals through the Community Oncology Program of Saskatchewan (COPS). The Cancer Agency also operates two patient lodges in Regina and Saskatoon to provide a home away from home for rural patients, so they do not have to travel long distances for treatment.

The Cancer Agency operates prevention and early detection programs, including screening programs for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers. Their Breast Screening Bus provides more than 8,000 mammograms annually to women in rural and northern Saskatchewan.

The Cancer Agency is proud to conduct innovative research performed by world-class scientists and researchers who provide laboratory, epidemiological and clinical research, including clinical trials.

Their more than 900 employees are passionate about caring for patients and ensuring that they, and their families, feel as comfortable and supported as possible, every step of the way.

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