



# Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PEP)

2024  
NEWSLETTER



Looking back at the last year of the Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) and NEW PEP programs we developed and began testing in the last year alone!

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**Dear recipient,**

If you are receiving this email, it is because our team at the Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) considers you a valued member of our community, and you play an essential role in the program's ongoing success.

This newsletter highlights significant milestones for the program and the accomplishments of our team members. We are proud to share everything we have achieved over the past year since our last newsletter and are even more excited about what's coming next.

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our generous donors, especially Frank and Debby Sobey. The seeds they planted with the Soillse Endowment have grown beyond its initial objectives, now helping thousands of people not just in Nova Scotia, but across Canada and beyond.

We are also immensely grateful to our patients, the patient support group, our dedicated staff, students, residents, clinicians, and all our collaborators in Canada and abroad. Special thanks to the Prostate Cancer Foundation New Zealand

(PCFNZ) and our Lead, Peter Dickens. It was wonderful to attend their annual conference, meet new partners, and form valuable collaborations with the PCFNZ and its members.

A huge thank you to Bernie Petolas, our Research Citizen Lead, for his tremendous contribution to the French PC-PEP translation. His help in organizing, structuring, and translating our materials has been invaluable. We managed to produce 182 daily videos and over 200 additional videos and materials with a fraction of the needed funding, and the quality is outstanding. We couldn't have done it without him.

We would also like to acknowledge all our mentors, buddies, and participants, especially our Research Citizen Leads, including Ross MacDonald, John Demmings, John Underhill, Pat Macdonald, Bernie Petolas, Kevin Barnett, Jerome and Colette Noseworthy. Your unwavering support and hard work have been vital to our success.

Rob and Gabriela's commitment remains stronger than ever. This year alone, they gave over 30 free talks to various cancer support community organizations throughout Canada, and they are looking forward to continuing to support cancer patients and community organizations, as well as delivering the invited Mike Pandolfi Endowed Lecture in Prostate Cancer Survivorship for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute at Harvard University this July.

We also see this newsletter as a way to connect with you and other members of our community. We encourage you to read it and share it with those who may be interested. Please note that you may unsubscribe at any time by clicking the "Unsubscribe" button at the bottom of the newsletter.

On behalf of the PC-PEP program, thank you for your ongoing participation and support.

Sincerely,  
The Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program Team

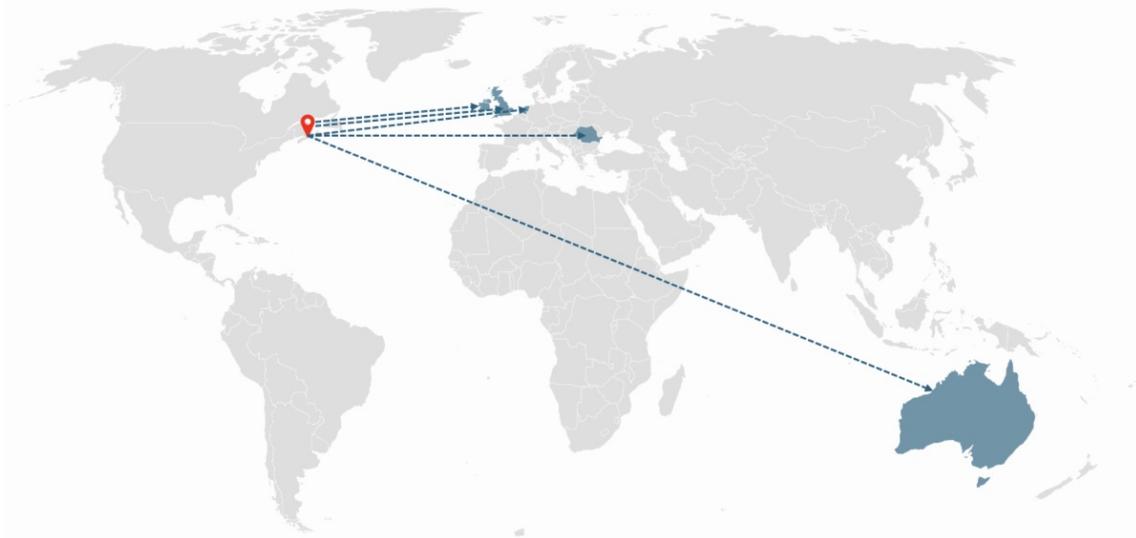




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## PC-PEP is on the move!

Our program leads are pleased to announce our ongoing efforts to expand the reach of the Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP). Over the past year, we have visited numerous potential new study sites with great success. We have initiated expansion negotiations in Australia (Melbourne and Brisbane), the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, the UK, and Romania. We are excited about these developments, our collaborative funding applications with various research grant agencies and stakeholders and look forward to bringing PC-PEP to more communities both nationally and internationally. In addition, we have submitted a major application for health equity research in Canada. We are eagerly awaiting the results of the competition, which will be released soon. We are hopeful for a positive outcome and the opportunity to further our research in this vital area.



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## PC-PEP Presentations and Conferences

The PC-PEP Team has been actively engaging with the global research community by attending and presenting at multiple conferences, both nationally and internationally. Our efforts have not only showcased our findings but also expanded our outreach, especially to marginalized communities. We organized and delivered a community-based conference to extend our reach and support to these groups.

At the 9th Medisprof Associations Best of ASCO Conference in Cluj, Romania, we presented our work and initiated a collaboration with Romanian researchers. In June 2023, we shared our findings at the Canadian Urological Association

Conference (CUA) and the Urological Excellence Conference - Urology Nurses of Canada (UNC) in Montréal, QC.

Our participation in the 43rd Congress of the Société Internationale d'Urologie (SIU) in Istanbul, Turkey, was particularly impactful. We delivered a plenary talk outlining the results of our research over the past year, which was enthusiastically received by attendees. This event also served as a springboard for collaborations with our partners in Australia.

In October 2023, we presented in Dublin, Ireland, at an event hosted by The Mater Foundation, and efforts are underway to initiate a trial there. At the 17th Atlantic Canadian Urologic Oncology Group (ACUOG) Multidisciplinary Meeting in Halifax, NS, in November 2023, we developed new collaborations with colleagues across the country.

We recently returned from New Zealand, where we presented the preliminary results of our trial. These presentations and collaborations underscore our commitment to advancing prostate cancer research and ensuring equitable health outcomes for all communities.

## **Exciting News: PC-PEP Program Now Available in French!**

We are thrilled to announce that the **Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP)** is now available in **French**. This expansion ensures that French-speaking patients can access the same comprehensive support and resources to improve their health and well-being.

Our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility has driven us to translate the entire program, including daily videos, educational materials, and support resources, into French. We believe that language should never be a barrier to receiving quality care and support. Huge thanks to our donors. The program that made this possible! We could have not done it without you.

For more information and to enroll in the French version of PC-PEP, please visit our website or contact our team. We look forward to empowering even more individuals on their journey to better health!

We would also like to extend a special thanks to **Bernie Petolas** for his help and enormous contribution as **Research Citizen Lead in bringing our French PC-PEP translation to fruition**. His dedication and hard work have made it possible for French-speaking participants to access our program and benefit from its resources. Read Bernie's interview on Radio Canada [here](#).

ICI Nouvelle-Écosse

À la une En continu Arts Sports Vidéojournal

cancer de la prostate.

Il s'agit d'un projet néo-écossais lancé en 2016 par une chercheuse de l'Université Dalhousie qui a détecté des cas de dépression profonde parmi les malades du cancer de la prostate. « Pour la prise en charge physique, on est en très bon état, mais on ne s'occupe pas de la santé mentale, c'est pour ça qu'on fait ce programme », explique Bernard Petolas.



Bernard Petolas, ancien malade du cancer de la prostate, est bénévole pour le Programme d'habilitation des patients atteints de cancer de la prostate.



**Mike Pandolfi Endowed Lecture in Prostate Cancer Survivorship**  
*The Science of Patient Empowerment: The Development and Clinical Trial Outcomes of the Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PCPEP.org)*

**Wednesday, July 31, 2024, 12pm-1pm EST**  
**Yawkey Building Conference Room 306/307**

**Featuring: Robert Rutledge, MD**

Radiation Oncologist, Nova Scotia Cancer Program  
 Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine  
 Dalhousie University

**Gabriela Ilie, PhD**

Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine Endowed Soillse Scientist in Prostate Cancer Quality of Life Research  
 Associate Professor, Faculty of Medicine  
 Dalhousie University



Together, Dr. Rutledge and Dr. Ilie have developed the Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC PEP) and Cancer PEP programs to support cancer survivors. Learn about their groundbreaking work and the impact of these programs on patient quality of life.

Learn More: Visit [PCPEP.org](https://PCPEP.org)  
 Visit [CancerPEP.com](https://CancerPEP.com)

<https://dfci.zoom.us/j/99236702178?pwd=anFPY3F1emRQczZyNVJoWlFdTn5QT09>



# Join our Private Facebook Groups



**PC-PEP (Prostate Cancer - Patient Empowerment Program)**

Private group · 113 members

We are excited to announce that we have established private Facebook groups for **PC-PEP**, **CancerPEP**, and **PictouCountyPEP**. These groups provide a safe and supportive community where participants can connect, share experiences, and offer encouragement. Members will have access to exclusive content, updates, and resources tailored to their specific program. Whether you are part of PC-PEP, CancerPEP, or PictouCountyPEP, these groups are designed to foster connection and empowerment. Join us and be a part of our vibrant community!

## The PC-PEP Third Annual Conference

Halifax, NS  
(April 2023)



## International 9th Medisprof Associations Best of ASCO Conference, Cluj, Romania

Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
(June 2023)



## The Canadian

# Urological Association Conference (CUA)

Montréal, QC  
(June 2023)



# Urological Excellence Conference - Urology Nurses of Canada (UNC)

Montréal, QC  
(June 2023)



# 43rd Congress of the Société Internationale d'Urologie (SIU)

Istanbul, Turkey  
(October 2023)



**Presentation hosted by The Mater Foundation**





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READ

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WATCH

## PICTOU COUNTY PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

Funded by the Aberdeen Health Foundation (AHF), Nova Scotia, Canada



### LIVE ONLINE PEP COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION BUILDING ACTIVITIES



Lead by Drs. Gabriela Ilie and Rob Rutledge;  
January. 20, 27, February. 3, March. 2, 9, 16, 23

- **Who:** All members of the PEP programs - PC-PEP, CancerPEP, Pictou County PEP
- **When:** Starting January, 20, 11:00am-12:00pm Atlantic Standard Time (check your time zone) and continuing the following Saturdays: January, 27 February, 3 March, 2, 9, 16, and 23
- **Where:** Via Zoom
- **What:** Live cooking classes, guided mindful meditation, Qi gong, gentle yoga, attitudinal healing, gentle dance class. To find out the specific schedule for that week check the PEP Facebook group, or the Extra Resources link in your daily emails) under Live Events. See you soon!
- These events are **FULLY OPTIONAL**

#### IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONTACT US AT:

PEP@NSHEALTH.CA  
902-473-7727

CLICK THE ZOOM LINK BELOW TO JOIN:  
[HTTPS://US06WEB.ZOOM.US/J/89044805085](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89044805085)



We are excited to announce the expansion of the PEP program beyond all forms of cancer to include all chronic diseases, aiming to create communities of empowerment. A prime example is the Pictou County PEP, a 6-month home-based comprehensive health-promotion program designed to improve the long-term mental and physical health of all adults in Pictou County, with a particular focus on those living with **chronic illness**. Launched in January this year, the program has already enrolled over 180 participants.

Our incredible collaboration with the **Aberdeen Health Foundation**, which has contributed \$100,000 to the project, has been instrumental in this initiative. Their support aligns with their mandate to improve the health of Pictou County residents. Since the program's inception, our team has hosted numerous presentations and events, including multiple community visits, a virtual PEP rally, a mini retreat, and a presentation to the **Gyro Club** in New Glasgow.

The seeds originally planted by **Frank and Debbi Sobey** through their **Soillse**



Endowment to the Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation have grown into a healthy, full-grown tree that keeps on giving. We are forever grateful to our donors who have made all this research possible.

For more details about the project please visit [pictoucountypep.org](http://pictoucountypep.org) or read our [Media Release here](#).



## CANCER PATIENT EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM

We are excited to announce the expansion of the PC-PEP program to encompass all forms of cancer through the Cancer PEP Research Trial. Having passed the 12-month mark, we are currently analyzing the data in preparation for writing manuscripts. CancerPEP now features a comprehensive library of 182 new daily videos, and the testimonials and preliminary analyses are



remarkably similar to the positive outcomes we have observed with PC-PEP. This expansion represents a significant step forward in our mission to empower all cancer patients with the tools and support they need for improved health and well-being. Visit [CancerPEP.org](http://CancerPEP.org)



## Featured Lab Publications

### **[A Comprehensive 6-mo Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program Decreases Psychological Distress Among Men Undergoing Curative Prostate Cancer Treatment: A Randomized Clinical Trial.](#)**

Ilie, G., Rendon, R., Mason, R., et al. (2023). A Comprehensive 6-mo Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program Decreases Psychological Distress Among Men Undergoing Curative Prostate Cancer Treatment: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *European Urology*, 83(6), 561-570.

### **[Six-Month Prostate Cancer Empowerment Program \(PC-PEP\) Improves Urinary Function: A Randomized Trial](#)**

Lawen, T., Ilie, G., Mason, R., Rendon, R., Spooner, J., Champion, E., Davis, J., MacDonald, C., Kucharczyk, M. J., Patil, N., Bowes, D., Bailly, G., Bell, D., Lawen, J., Wilke, D., Kephart, G., & Rutledge, R. D. H. (2024). Six-Month Prostate Cancer Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) Improves Urinary Function: A Randomized Trial. *Cancers*, 16(5), 958. <https://doi.org/10.3390/cancers16050958>

### **[PC-PEP, a Comprehensive Daily Six-Month Home-Based Patient Empowerment Program Leads to Weight Loss in Men with Prostate Cancer: A Secondary Analysis of a Clinical Trial](#)**

MacNevin W, Ilie G, Rendon R, Mason R, Spooner J, Chedrawe E, Patil N, Bowes D, Bailly G, Bell D, et al. PC-PEP, a Comprehensive Daily Six-Month Home-Based Patient Empowerment Program Leads to Weight Loss in Men with Prostate Cancer: A Secondary Analysis of a Clinical Trial. *Current Oncology*. 2024; 31(3):1667-1688. <https://doi.org/10.3390/curroncol31030127>

### **[Assessing the Efficacy of a 28-Day Comprehensive Online Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program \(PC-PEP\) in Facilitating Engagement of Prostate Cancer Patients in Their Survivorship Care: A Qualitative Study](#)**

Ilie G, MacDonald C, Richman H, Rendon R, Mason R, Nuyens A, Bailly G, Bell D, Patil N, Bowes D, et al. Assessing the Efficacy of a 28-Day Comprehensive Online Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) in Facilitating Engagement of Prostate Cancer Patients in Their Survivorship Care: A Qualitative

## [Changes in Stress Reduction Following a 28-Day Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program \(PC-PEP\) among Prostate Cancer Survivors](#)

Burge L, Ilie G, MacDonald C, Riel H, Rutledge RDH. Changes in Stress Reduction Following a 28-Day Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) among Prostate Cancer Survivors. Current Oncology. 2023; 30(9):7936-7949. <https://doi.org/10.3390/currenconcol30090577>

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## PC-PEP Soillse Lab Trainees

The PC-PEP program is supported by an incredible team of talented graduate students, research staff, urology residents, and volunteers. While dedicating their time to the growth of PC-PEP, they are also excelling in their own research, publications, and studies. Their hard work and dedication are driving both the success of the program and advancements in their respective fields.



**Cody MacDonald (Soillse Lab Project Coordinator)** continues to support and coordinate the lab's operations and staff and we are so deeply grateful for his dedication and hard work. Cody has successfully defended his master's thesis in March and graduated with a MSc in Epidemiology and Applied Health Research in May 2024. His thesis is now under review for publication. Since Cody joined our lab he published 11 papers. More papers than any Epidemiology student published while completing their degree, in the history of our Department. Congratulations Cody! We could not do all this work without you.

**Lia Massoeurs (Soillse Lab Research Coordinator)** has been acting as a part time Research Coordinator. She is currently in her third year of the MSc in Epidemiology and Applied Health Research Program at Dalhousie University. She presented some of Dr. Ilie's qualitative research in June at the 78th Annual CUA Meeting (2023). Her thesis proposal of a qualitative realist evaluation of the PC-PEP program was successfully defended in November, and she is now preparing for her thesis completion defence to roll out this summer.

**Alexandra Nuyens (Soillse Lab Research Assistant)** has been acting as a part time Research Assistant. Alexandra is in her second year of the MSc in Epidemiology and Applied Health Research at Dalhousie University. She was awarded the Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine Graduate Studentship provided by the Kilpatrick Trust and the QEII Foundation Diversity in Health Care Bursary to fund

her thesis work. She presented some of her thesis work in November at the 2023 Canadian Cancer Research Conference; Cancer: Prevention, Treatment and You: presented by the Canadian Cancer Research Alliance. Her thesis proposal of a cost evaluation of the PC-PEP program was successfully defended in April and Alex is now about to defend her completed thesis.

**Markos Tsirigotis (Soillse Lab Program Coordinator)** has been acting as a full-time program coordinator since May of 2023 and he is a critical and valued member of our team. He successfully planned and organized our PC-PEP conference in April of 2023 and is an integral member of our lab team. He graduated in May of 2023 from Dalhousie University with a Bachelor of Science in Health Promotion.

**Ashley Robinson**, a Soillse Lab Associate and General Surgery Resident, is currently completing an MSc thesis under the supervision of Dr. Gabriela Ilie. As a urology paediatric surgeon resident, Ashley's research focuses on the relationship between institutional and individual surgical volumes and outcomes for index conditions in Pediatric Surgery across Canada. Her dedication and hard work have earned her several accolades, including the best resident presentation at this year's DOS Research Day, a FoM Thesis Award in May, and a successful thesis proposal defense in March. We are incredibly proud of Ashley's achievements and her contributions to our research community.

**Laura Burge (Soillse Lab Research In Medicine (RIM) Student)** is completing a Research In Medicine (RIM) PC-PEP related project with Dr. Ilie. Her work titled "Changes in Stress Reduction Following a 28-Day Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) among Prostate Cancer Survivors" has been published in the Journal of Current Oncology and a second publication is underway. [Click here to read.](#)

**Cory Burgher (Soillse Lab Research In Medicine (RIM) Student)** is completing a Research In Medicine (RIM) PC-PEP related project with Dr. Ilie. Her work focuses on the Phase 3 RCT and relationship satisfaction. Her project is now ready for publication.

**Drs. Tarek Lawen, Wyatt MacNevin, Jesse Spooner, Charlie Gillis, Morgan MacDonald, Emily Chedrawe, Martha Foley | Urology Residents, Department of Urology, Faculty of Medicine, Dalhousie University**



Recent awards and presentations related to the PC-PEP program:

- **Martha Foley** - Doctors of Nova Scotia Research Day Prize 2024, CUA 2024 Podium presentation, Urology Research Day Dalhousie University 2024.
  - **Tarek Lawen** - Urology Research Day Dalhousie University 2023, CUA 2023 Keynote presentation, poster presentation, publication of the project in Cancers 2024.
  - **Wyatt MacNevin** - Urology Research Day Dalhousie University 2023, CUA 2023 poster presentation, publication of project in Current Oncology.
  - **Charlie Gillis** - Urology Research Day Dalhousie University 2023 & 2024, CUA 2023 poster presentation, publication of project in Current Oncology.
  - **Jesse Spooner** - Urology Research Day Dalhousie University 2023, CUA 2023 presentation, publication of project in Cancers 2024.
  - **Morgan MacDonald** - Urology Research Day Dalhousie University 2023, CUA 2023 presentation, publication of project in Current Oncology
  - **Emily Chedrawe** - Publication of project in Cancers 2024.
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#### **Student Volunteers:**

- **Kelly Page** | Health Promotion Student (Year 3), Dalhousie University
  - **Abby Shimmerman** | Kinesiology Student (Year 4), Dalhousie University
  - **Gabby Fera** | Health Promotion Student (Year 2), Dalhousie University
  - **James Langley** | Health Sciences Student (Year 1), Queen's University
  - **Elizabeth Langley** | Health Sciences Student (Year 4), Queen's University
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We would like to take this opportunity to **THANK** our 2023-2024 sponsors and donors for making possible all the clinical, residents, nursing, patient and community education related activities we delivered. **THANK YOU** to **Frank and Debby Sobey, Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation/DMRF Soillse Research Fund** (now operated by **Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine Advancement Office**), **TOLMAR Pharmaceuticals, Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Knight Pharmaceuticals, the Aberdeen Health Foundation, TERSERA, Amgen, and the Pictou County Prostate Cancer Support Association, Prostate Cancer Support Group Toronto.**





We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the patients and their partners who have participated and continue to participate in our studies. Many of these partners have become mentors and Research Citizen Leads for our program. Their dedication and support have been invaluable.

Our monthly scientific updates and video conferences, held on the **first Tuesday of the month from 7:30 to 8:30 PM Atlantic Time, have been ongoing** since 2019 and will continue as usual. Our **New Zealand** participants have been regularly attending these meetings, and it is wonderful to see the many friendships developing over Facebook and in the breakout groups between our countries. Several of our **Māori and Pacifica** participants have expressed their enjoyment of these groups, and it is our hope that as recruitment increases in New Zealand, we **will soon be able to dedicate time specifically for these groups, grow our community, and create new programming tailored to their needs and those of other groups within our program.**

We now also have a group meeting from **6:30 to 7:30 PM Atlantic Time with our Research Citizen Leads**, which has proven beneficial for **newcomers, men living in rural removed areas, men diagnosed before 50 years old, and anyone interested in connecting with other participants in the program going through treatment.** Additionally, we run a **6:30 to 7:30 PM Atlantic Time group for 2SLGBTQ+ and MSM communities.** We are also in the process of

**organizing new groups for Black/African Canadians and Canadian Indigenous participants.** Furthermore, **we are interested in creating a group for young men diagnosed with prostate cancer.** Tailoring to our participants' unique group needs is something we are committed to, and we will report on developments in the next year. For more information on our initiatives, please reach out to Cody MacDonald at [pep@nshealth.ca](mailto:pep@nshealth.ca). **Health equity remains a priority for our team.**

We also hold monthly video conferences on the **second and third Tuesdays of the month from 7:30 to 8:30 PM Atlantic Time for our CancerPEP and Pictou County PEP groups.** In addition, we lead many weekly PEP live events and activities for program participants, which will continue this year. Please check the extra resources page of the program for more information. We are deeply touched by everyone's contribution and participation and always look forward to these one-on-one connections.

We want to thank **Frank and Debbi Sobey** for inspiring our work and supporting our lab's research and operations over the past eight years. Their dedication to innovative cancer research has made our research possible. We also thank our diverse research grant funders, including **Research Nova Scotia (PC-PEP Phase 3 Research Clinical Trial), Beatrice Hunter Cancer Research Institute (cancer population surveillance research), NFRF (arsenic-related cancer toxicity work),** and all our research donors.

Lastly, we are grateful to the **many community members, Research Citizens, Research Citizen Leads, and Mentors** for their **engagement in our research from the start.** You are an essential part of our success in reaching and supporting cancer patients everywhere, as well as shaping the direction of our research.

**Thank you all!**

*Gabriela, Rob and all our Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine Soillse Cancer Research Lab Team*

## Want to learn more?

Visit our [PC-PEP.org](http://PC-PEP.org)  
Website

Visit our [PictouCountyPEP.org](http://PictouCountyPEP.org)  
Website

Visit our [CancerPEP.org](http://CancerPEP.org)  
Website



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