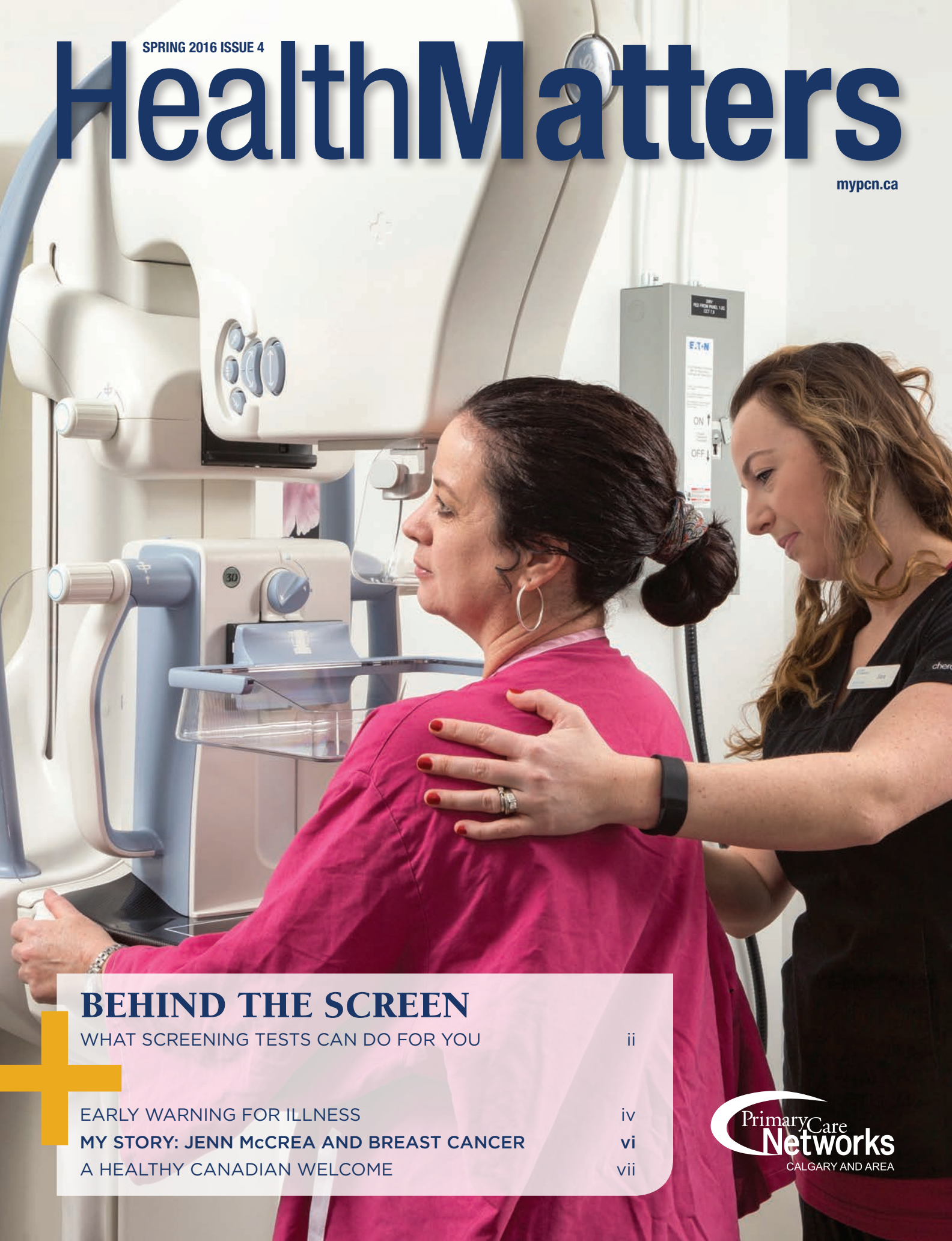


SPRING 2016 ISSUE 4

HealthMatters

mypcn.ca



BEHIND THE SCREEN

WHAT SCREENING TESTS CAN DO FOR YOU

ii

EARLY WARNING FOR ILLNESS

iv

MY STORY: JENN MCCREA AND BREAST CANCER

vi

A HEALTHY CANADIAN WELCOME

vii

PrimaryCare
Networks
CALGARY AND AREA



▶ Your *Health Matters*

Health Matters is published by Calgary and area Primary Care Networks (PCNs) to give you information about the programs, services and health teams available to you through your family doctor. More than 60,000 copies are distributed in the Calgary area.

Research shows when people visit a family doctor regularly, they are healthier and live longer. People with chronic diseases also receive more care, make fewer emergency department visits and are hospitalized less.

More than 1,300 family doctors in 346 clinics belong to PCNs in the Calgary area. They care for about 1.1 million patients.

Health Matters, Spring 2016 Issue publication team:

Keith Bradford, Terry Bullick, Bart Goemans, Cori Leyte, Dr. Christine Luelo, Jacque Maurice, Amy Sawchenko, Chrissie Worth

Contributors:

Jennifer Allford, Penny Breedon, Anne Georg, Doug R. Horner, Michael Interisano, Jacqueline Louie, Sherry Mumford, Jimi Scherer, Brett Tiesmaki, Neil Zeller

We appreciate your feedback and article suggestions. Contact our editorial team at communications@mypcn.ca.

To find your PCN, visit mypcn.ca

- › Bow Valley Primary Care Network
- › Calgary Foothills Primary Care Network
- › Calgary Rural Primary Care Network
- › Calgary West Central Primary Care Network
- › Highland Primary Care Network
- › Mosaic Primary Care Network
- › South Calgary Primary Care Network

Behind the screen

What screening tests can do for you

Rhonda Petryk takes a proactive approach to her health.

"I would much rather be doing things for my health now, than wait until I have some major health issue, and then dealing with it after the fact," she says.

As part of that approach, she recently had screening tests for breast cancer, osteoporosis and colon cancer.

"Screening serves as an early warning system to alert people to a potential for illness and allows them to do what's necessary to avoid getting 'ill' or labelled with a disease such as diabetes or hypertension," says Dr. Anthony Train, who is part of the South Calgary PCN.

Screening tests and tools can include an examination, procedure and questions to help detect, diagnose and if needed, shape treatment. Screening is different from diagnostic tests—such as a blood test—which are used to diagnose specific symptoms and complaints.

"We screen healthy people for potential early illnesses," Train explains. Screening is "an ongoing conversation with your health-care provider, which is tailored for you."

Dr. Jim Dickinson, a family medicine professor at the University of Calgary and a member of the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, says some screening tests are highly effective. Others have less value and must be carefully considered with your primary care doctor before being conducted.



Photo: Neil Zeller

Proactive about her health, Rhonda Petryk had screening tests for breast cancer, osteoporosis and colon cancer.



Photo: Michael Interisano

A patient at RCA Diagnostics discusses the results of her mammogram with Dr. Illya Boridy.

Getting screening while you're healthy can go a long way to prevent illness in the future

"Many patients are concerned when we suggest they not be screened for certain diseases," Dickinson says. "The issue is a matter of balancing the harms and benefits of screening tests."

He adds false positive test results, which are common in some procedures, can be very stressful for patients and families and may cause harm from unnecessary treatments. Choosing the right preventive activities is critical.

Primary care doctors routinely screen patients by talking to them about lifestyle factors, such as family history, smoking, physical activity, diet and sex partners. As patients age and their health risks change, doctors also turn to screening tests to detect or assess the risk of certain illnesses.

With the introduction of provincial electronic

medical records, doctors are better able to track their screening tests. Some, like Dr. Heather La Borde of the Calgary Foothills PCN, use the system to phone and remind patients of regular cancer screening tests.

Says Train: "Getting screening while you're healthy can go a long way to prevent illness in the future." Bigger still, says Dickinson, is what people do for themselves.

"Positive change to your behaviour—your lifestyle—is still the most important way to prevent disease."

— Anne Georg



See the screening information on the next page

Early warning for illness

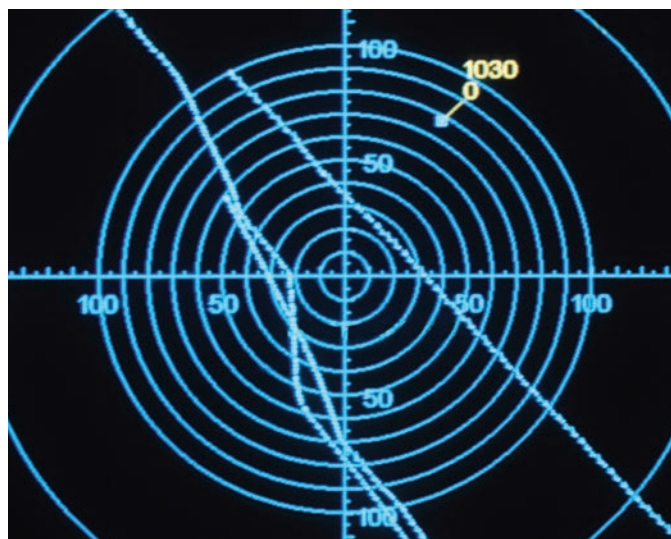
Early diagnosis = more successful treatment

Screening tests and tools are used to detect diseases in their early stages or diseases that don't have visible signs.

The screening tests and tools your primary care doctor recommends for you and your family are often based on your age, lifestyle and your personal and family history.

Dr. Jim Dickinson, a family medicine professor at the University of Calgary and a member of the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care, recommends some tests only be taken after talking to your doctor about the benefits and risks of the tests.

This table lists common screening tests and tools in Alberta.



WHAT	WHO & WHEN		NOTES
SCREENING TOOLS			
Behaviours			
Smoking	M/F 15+	During regular visits	Your doctor will ask if you smoke or use tobacco
Height, weight & waist	M/F all ages	Every 2 to 5 years	Your body mass index gauges many health risks
Physical activity	M/F all ages	Every 2 to 5 years	Active living promotes health; inactive living promotes illness
Alcohol & drugs	M/F 15+	Every 2 to 5 years	Drinking more than the recommended limits increases risks to you and those around you
Safety	M/F all ages	During regular visits	Your approach to safety such as seatbelts, helmet, high-risk sports, etc.
Sun exposure/protection	M/F all ages	During regular visits	Time in sun and use of hats, clothing and sunscreens to prevent skin cancer
Family history	M/F 15+	Every 5 years	Your family's genes and experiences affect your health
Contraception & sexually transmitted diseases	M/F 15 to 50 who are sexually active	During regular visits	Pregnancy planning, STDs can be passed to others
Dietary			
Vitamin D	M/F 15+	During regular visits	Vitamin D essential to healthy bones, teeth, muscles and nerves Your primary care doctor can advise how much to take
Fruits, vegetables and salt	M/F all ages	During regular visits	Eating more fruits, vegetables and less salt a boost to health
Folate/folic acid	F planning pregnancy	During regular visits prior to and during pregnancy	A vitamin that prevents certain birth defects

WHAT	WHO & WHEN		NOTES
Vision	M/F 6 months+ to 18 years	Every 1 to 2 years	Exam to identify, reduce and correct vision difficulties Annual optometrist exams are free in Alberta for children under 18 and adults 65+
	M/F 18+	Varies by age, vision and health	Discuss with your optometrist or primary care doctor
Dental	M/F 6 months+	Every 1 to 2 years	To prevent and detect cavities and other oral and general health diseases Use of fluoridated toothpaste for those 3+ years
SCREENING TESTS			
Infections			
Chlamydia	F 15 to 30 if sexually active	As often as every year	Recommended if sexually active with more than one partner; can cause infections in men and women Urine test to detect
Cardiovascular			
Blood pressure	M/F 30+	Every 5 years More for high risk	Identify conditions such as high blood pressure and heart disease
Cholesterol & lipids	M 40+/F 50+	Every 5 years	Assess risk of heart attack using Framingham calculator
Abdominal aortic aneurysm	M 65+ who have been heavy smokers	Once	Discuss with your doctor to understand your risk of a ruptured aorta
Cancer			
Cervical	F 25 to 70	Every 3 years	After several years of sexual activity, a Pap test is used to detect cervical cancer
Breast	F 40+ if high risk F 50+ if low risk	Every 2 to 3 years	Discuss with family doctor to understand your risk of breast cancer
Colorectal	M/F 40+ if high risk 50+ if low risk	Every 2 years	Fecal immunochemical test (FIT) to detect colon cancer; discuss with family doctor to understand your risk

Learn more about screening and preventive care at: Alberta Screening for Life (screeningforlife.ca) and the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care at (canadiantaskforce.ca).

A letter worth reading

Life is busy and you can forget to make an appointment with your primary care doctor for screening tests. That's why Alberta Health Services may send you a reminder.

Based on your age and if you've been previously screened, you could get a letter reminding you to have a screen test for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer. You could also get a letter if any screening test is overdue.

After these cancer-screening tests, you'll receive a followup letter with your results.

All information is secure, private and confidential. The only information given to AHS by Alberta Health is your name, address, age and whether you've been screened for certain cancers.

— A.G.



For more information, contact Alberta Health Services Screening Programs at 1-866-727-3926 or visit screeningforlife.ca.

My story

Jenn McCrea and breast cancer

Screening stopped a disease that was ‘coming for me’

Two years after being diagnosed with breast cancer, Jenn McCrea completed her first Ironman Triathlon.

“I finished last,” she laughs, “but I finished! My kids were there, everybody cheered for me and it was a great moment. And I was there because my cancer was caught so early.”

Cancer runs in McCrea’s family: her father had genetic screening in 2005 and tested positive for a gene mutation that increases the risk of breast and ovarian cancer. This led to McCrea being screened for the same gene. She also tested positive.

McCrea was referred to the Breast Cancer Supportive Care Foundation for high-risk surveillance. This included alternating mammograms and breast magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) every six months, regular clinical breast exams, being more active, eating more healthy foods and ongoing counselling and support.

Ultimately, an MRI changed everything and she was diagnosed with stage 0 breast cancer on July 18, 2011. The diagnosis meant she had the disease but it hadn’t spread.

“My kids were with me in the room, my doctor and I were crying together,” McCrea recalls. “Even at stage 0 it’s still very, very scary—it’s still the word cancer.”

The good news was the cancer’s early detection.

“The earlier the stage you find the cancer, typically the lower the risk and the better the long-term

Photo: Penny Breerton



Jenn McCrea says screening was key to the early detection of her breast cancer.

prognosis,” Dr. Ardythe Taylor of Breast Cancer Supportive Care and part of the Calgary West Central PCN explains. “Between five to 10 per cent of people who develop breast cancer have a gene mutation.”

A month after her diagnosis, McCrea had a double mastectomy and was home the next day. “I was bandaged up and in discomfort, but I was alive, right?” she says. “The team at Breast Cancer Supportive Care had mentally prepared me for the fact that I might eventually need this surgery, so I was ready.”

“For me, having the gene mutation, wasn’t a matter of if I would get cancer, it was when,” she says. “It was coming for me, and it was going to be bad. Screening was key.”

— Brett Tiesmaki



Your family’s history of cancer is an important factor in genetic screening for cancer. Ask your family doctor if you qualify for a referral.

A healthy Canadian welcome

Mosaic PCN cares for Syrian refugees

Syrian brothers Bshara and Joseph Al-Khoury are among the many government-sponsored Syrian refugees who recently arrived in Calgary—and at the Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic. Part of the Mosaic Primary Care Network in northeast Calgary, the clinic has more than a decade of experience welcoming refugees and caring for their health needs.

Located in Marlborough Mall, the clinic has a multidisciplinary team that includes 12 family doctors, social workers, nurses and specialists. They treat refugees for up to two years, or until they're ready to see a physician in the community. "Most of our refugees are resettled in the northeast," says Dr. Annalee Coakley, MRHC's lead physician.

The Al-Khourys are typical of most new refugees at the clinic: they arrive with a variety of questions about how to settle into their new life. The Al-Khourys' questions were answered, in Arabic, by Magda Hussein, the MRHC's transition and community coordinator.

"We are very thankful that Magda is helping us in our own language," Bshara says. Hussein has connected the family to health services and social groups and has helped with medical appointments, transportation and passes to fitness centres and the Calgary Zoo.

The MRHC usually treats every new refugee that arrives in Calgary, about 700 people a year. With more Syrian refugees making Calgary home, other clinics and Arabic-speaking physicians have helped the clinic.

"Now we are here, and Canada is the future," says Bshara, who is living with Joseph, Joseph's wife and the couple's two children in northeast Calgary. "We

know it is hard, but we are not sure how hard it will be or for how long."

With their most pressing health needs looked after, the Al-Khoury brothers hope to recertify their technical skills and work as electricians or computer technicians. One of the first things they did when they arrived was to evaluate the city's electrical outlets, panels and light fixtures, and they were relieved to discover that electricity is a universal language.

— Doug R. Horner

The Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic is open to all new refugees in the Calgary area, including those privately sponsored. To learn more, visit mosaicpcn.ca.

Brothers Joseph Al-Khoury (far left) and Bshara Al-Khoury (far right) are among the hundreds of Syrian refugees who have been helped by Magda Hussein (left), Dr. Gabriel Fabreau (right) and others at the Mosaic Refugee Health Clinic in Calgary.





Dennis and Betty Cassidy
Photo: Michael Interisano

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE

Power to the people

Why my health is important to me

Name: Dennis Cassidy, 75

Health condition: Recently diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

Health goal: To control my blood sugar levels. I want to have many years of good health to share with my wife and family.



Working together: “We work to empower patients so they can care for their health. By spending one-on-one time with Dennis, I can give him advice and education tailored to his needs for diet, active living and how to manage his medication,” says Carmen Wong, a clinical pharmacist with the Calgary Foothills Primary Care Network.

— Jacqueline Louie