

## **Recap of the CPAC “Innovative Approaches to Optimal Cancer Care in Canada”**

**By Louise Bird, CPQR Patient Representative**

I was invited to provide a patient perspective on the work CPQR is doing to help improve the involvement of patients in radiation treatment programs. The conference had something for everyone including patient and family advisors. Yes(!) it was technical; however, the underlying theme was how to make cancer care better for everyone involved and speakers worked to involve all registrants. They talked about having a seamless approach to care and having **all** partners working together for a common goal: “Better Cancer Care”.

I spent a considerable amount of time networking both in front of our poster, and during the sessions. Everyone was interested in hearing my opinion. Some of the things I discussed with others were:

- How an organization can engage a broad sector of patient advisors to help them represent the breadth of patient experience. We talked about some ways that they could engage patients and make them more familiar and comfortable with committee processes. I also mentioned what CPQR has done to support their patient representatives through advocacy training, mentoring and communication support.
- How a single patient voice can impact program planning. A retired Urologist told me his experience from years ago when he was part of a patient focus group. They were discussing plans for a new treatment centre and the patient voice changed the architectural layout for the clinic.
- The challenges of engaging programs in this work and how we can use the patient voice to advocate for quality and safety initiatives.

My belief in the strength and power of the patient voice was reinforced through these discussions and I would like to thank CPQR for empowering all their patient representatives by “paying more than lip service” to our involvement.