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Dear Friends,

As the year winds down I wanted to thank all of you for your support during the past year and reflect upon our current and future plans in the battle against pancreatic cancer.

Pancreatic Cancer has been a relatively silent killer. Many are surprised to hear that it is the fourth leading cause of cancer death in Canada, sitting behind only lung, colorectal and breast cancers. It is through the good work of people like Libby Znaimer, Betty Aldridge and Laurie Ellies at Pancreatic Cancer Canada that public awareness is on the increase. This greater awareness has allowed us to raise more support from both public and private sources for our research to fight and defeat pancreatic cancer.

Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) is recognized as a leader in pancreatic cancer research worldwide. We are one of the largest surgical centres in North America with both a high volume and very low surgical complication rate. We are part of an international consortium that is trying to find pancreatic cancer genes so that screening and early detection can be initiated in high-risk groups. We have played a leading role in the development of both gemcitabine and erlotinib the 2 drugs presently approved for pancreatic cancer.

Despite these accomplishments there is much work to do. I would like to outline our priorities for the upcoming year and where we would propose to invest the funds that you have raised through your participation in the PMH Walk and in events sponsored by Pancreatic Cancer Canada. It is important to understand that we are able to leverage funds raised through public events like walks and golf tournaments so we get more 'bang for our buck.' The demonstration of the interest and support of our cause by people like you has helped us to raise additional funds from the Ontario government, pharmaceutical sponsors and other philanthropy.

We will continue our efforts to find better treatments for advanced pancreatic cancer. There are a lot of interesting new therapies coming into clinical trials and we have been fortunate to obtain a number of the best new drugs for our upcoming studies in pancreatic cancer. We are linking our clinical trials program with strong laboratory programs in genetics so that we can better understand why treatments do and don't work in different individuals. We are also creating xenografts from as many human tumors as possible [xenografts are human tumors that are grown in mice who have no immune system – this allows us to study the human disease in mice and in particular test new combinations of therapies to allow selection of the most promising treatments for clinical trials]. We are also creating a 'biobank' of blood and tumors from patients and linking it to clinical outcome. This will allow us to look for new blood markers that might be useful as screening tests as well as to better understand why some patients have better outcomes than others.

Our newest initiative is to create a 'Rapid Diagnostic Centre for Pancreatic Cancer' at PMH. Most patients present to their local doctors with relatively vague symptoms and we find that it often takes 2-4 months from this time until a diagnosis is made and they are referred to see us. We need to do much better and provide better service for this patient population. Time is precious for patients with pancreatic cancer and during this 2-4 month phase many patients become ill and are less able to be treated aggressively. We would like to create a facility where patients could have their blood, radiology, biopsy and other interventions done within a week and then be immediately assessed by the oncology team. It would mean a higher likelihood for curative therapies and would also further support all of our research programs.

So thank you again for your commitment to the battle against pancreatic cancer. I look forward to meeting many of you next year at the Walk, the Dick Aldridge Golf tournament or one of the other events to support pancreatic cancer. I wish all of you a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Malcolm Moore MD