MESSAGE FROM

Chantale Thurston
Member, 2025 PIP Working Committee

My name is Chantale Thurston, and I live in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I am a Chartered Professional Accountant, married, and a proud mom to an 11-year-old son.

A few years ago, while my husband and I were trying for a second child, I experienced a miscarriage and noticed that my body wasn't returning to normal. We met with a fertility clinic, and after a laparoscopic procedure, the doctor came back with devastating news: I had cancer—and it was everywhere. At just 34 years old, I was diagnosed with Stage IV pseudomyxoma peritonei (or appendix cancer). Tragically, this came only months after losing my father to colon and lung cancer.

After meeting other young adults with cancer and hearing their stories, I was motivated to find ways to make the journey easier for those who come after us. By sharing my own story, I hope to raise awareness that cancer can affect young people and to encourage others to pay attention to changes in their bodies.

I've been fortunate to participate as a patient partner at several conferences, including virtually at the last two Canadian Cancer Research Conferences (CCRC), and I've also contributed to research with Dr. Perri Tutelman, a psychologist from the University of Calgary. Most recently, I was honoured to be selected as a patient and family representative on the advisory board of the Canadian Cancer Research Alliance (CCRA), and I am currently part of the working committee for their upcoming conference.

My first PIP was in 2021, when the entire conference was held virtually. One of the highlights was getting to co-chair a session — I was paired with a researcher, and we recorded our introduction together ahead of time.

This year, I'm excited to participate in person for the first time and finally meet the researchers and scientific mentors that patient partners are paired with. We love hearing about the incredible research being done and all the new discoveries being made, so I hope everyone will stop by, say hello, and share what you're working on!

PIP (Patient Involvement in Cancer Research Program) is designed to build the capacity of patient research advocates. It provides patient partners with opportunities to learn directly from Canada's

leading cancer researchers and trainees, while also giving the scientific community valuable opportunities to learn from and engage with patient partners. The program has grown and there are only 20 spots for PIP participants. However, there is much interest in the program! It's great to have a blend of experienced advocates and some new to advocacy so that we can all learn together.

We are deeply grateful to all the past and present sponsors of the conference. Your support makes it possible for researchers to connect with and learn from patients through the PIP program — an exchange that enriches cancer research in meaningful ways.