



**Board Executive:**

Chair - Dr. Mark Bernstein

Vice Chair- Dr. Jack Hand

Secretary/Treasurer - Theresa Marie Underhill

## APPHON/ROHPPA NEWSLETTER

Atlantic Provinces Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Network  
Réseau d'Oncologie et Hématologie Pédiatrique des Provinces Atlantiques  
Fall 2008/Issue 15

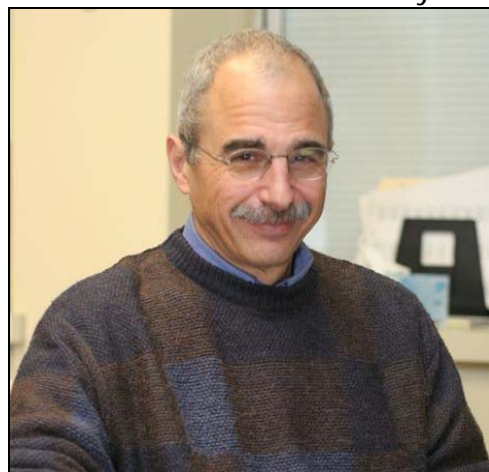
### 2008 Annual General Meeting

Theresa Marie Underhill, treasurer of APPHON/ROHPPA, presided over the 2008 AGM held in September. The main item on the AGM agenda was the slate of officers presented to the committee on changes to the APPHON/ROHPPA Board of Directors. Kim Chapman has completed her term as chair and will remain on the board as past chair for the term of one year. Thank you to Kim for a wonderful job as chair. Dr. Dorothy Barnard has completed her term on the APPHON/ROHPPA Board. Jackie Rogers has resigned from the board. Dr. Mark Bernstein will be the new chair of APPHON/ROHPPA with Dr. Jack Hand as vice chair. New board members include: Charlene Coade, RN. from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in PEI; Peggy Wheaton from the Child Life department, South East Regional Hospital in Moncton; Donna Krasowski MSN from the Cape Breton Regional Hospital.

### Board Members:

Dr. Mark Bernstein has accepted the office of Chair. Following residency and

fellowship training, Dr. Bernstein became a faculty member at the Montreal Children's Hospital/McGill University in the division of pediatric hematology oncology in 1981. In 1999, he became Chief of the division of pediatric hematology-oncology at Hôpital Ste-Justine and Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the Université de Montréal. In 2006, he moved to Halifax where he is head of the division of pediatric hematology oncology and Professor of Pediatrics at Dalhousie University.



*Dr. Mark Bernstein*

Dr. Bernstein's principal research interests have been in clinical trials, primarily in new drug development and

bone sarcoma, mainly through the Pediatric Oncology Group and its successor, the Children's Oncology Group. He has held a variety of leadership positions in those groups, and serves as an external scientific advisor to the New Approaches to Neuroblastoma Therapy group. Recently, Dr. Bernstein has become Chair of the Management Committee of Cancer in Young People-Canada, a revitalization of the Canadian Childhood Cancer Surveillance and Control Program. Dr. Bernstein has also had an interest in collaborating in preclinical studies of gene re-activation.

**Donna Krasowski** received her nursing diploma from the Sydney City Hospital. She then went on to get her BScN from St. FXU and her Masters in nursing from the University of Alberta. She also completed the Neonatal Nursing course at the Grace Maternity Hospital in Halifax.



*Donna Krasowski*

Donna has worked as a Nurse Clinician in Pediatrics at the Cape Breton Regional Hospital since 2005 and assists with the Chemotherapy Administration course at CBRH. She has experience in a variety of health care settings: rural, NICU, management, occupational health, research and travel nursing. Donna is married with one daughter and one grandson.

**Peggy Wheaton**; Peggy has worked with children and youth for the past 25 years in her role as an educator and certified child life specialist.



*Peggy Wheaton*

She has a Bachelor of Child Studies from Mount Saint Vincent University and a Special Education Degree from Acadia University, Peggy's employment and volunteer experiences have taken her overseas but the bulk of her career has been spent in the Maritimes. She spent the first half of her career as a child life specialist on the oncology/haematology units of the IWK. Subsequent years have been spent within the New Brunswick education and health care systems. Peggy is presently the Director of Child Life Services at the South East Regional Hospital in Moncton, and continues to be actively involved in her community. She lives in Riverview with her husband David and son Connor but still enjoys coming home to Nova Scotia to visit family and friends.

### **2008 Conference Recap:**

The results are in and our 2008 conference was a huge success. A few issues have arisen surrounding the breakaway sessions which will hopefully be corrected next year. Other than that a huge thank you to the organizing committee and all of the speakers who helped make this one of the highest rated conferences in APPHON/ROHPPA history!

Carol Digout will place minutes from individual group meetings on the website.

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## Spring APHON Chemotherapy/Biotherapy Course

Because of the high demand, the IWK is once again opening up the APHON Chemotherapy/biotherapy course to all APPHON/ROHPPA members. The first course will be held on April 29, 30th and May 1st.

If you have questions regarding content/course contact Mary Jean at [maryjeanhowitt@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:maryjeanhowitt@iwk.nshealth.ca) or Paula at [paula.murphy@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:paula.murphy@iwk.nshealth.ca). Any APPHON/ROHPPA member wanting to participate please contact Carol at [carol.digout@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:carol.digout@iwk.nshealth.ca).

## Immunization Guideline Correction

This year when organizing our flu vaccine letters, it was brought to our attention that the APPHON Immunization Guidelines no longer match what the IWK are advising. A letter of correction has been sent to all physicians who have patients on active treatment; the letter is attached to the newsletter. *Gloria Gallant, clinical leader, 6 North Ambulatory Care, IWK Health Centre, [Gloria.gallant@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:Gloria.gallant@iwk.nshealth.ca)*

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## Levels of Care - What's happening?

A working group is reviewing the Levels of Care standards - updating and revising as required. Time line expectations are completion by March 2009 along with revision of the assessment forms and table to match.

A working group developed the "Levels of Care and Chemotherapy Administration to Children and Youth in Atlantic Canada," which describes the chemotherapy that can be administered at the different levels of care. This will be appended in the revised Levels of Care standards.

The nursing group has developed and approved the document "Practice Standards and Competencies for Nurses Providing Pediatric Non Malignant Hematology Care in Atlantic Canada." It has been forwarded to the board awaiting approval. This will be appended in the revised Levels of Care standards as well as "Practice Standards and Competencies for Nurses Providing Pediatric Cancer Care in Atlantic Canada."

The nursing group is now developing APPHON Chemotherapy Administration Provider Qualifications. This will specify the qualifications required by Atlantic Provinces nurses to administer pediatric chemotherapy. It will address initial competencies and maintenance of competencies.

Follow-up site visits planned for some NS sites are on hold until spring. Because of scheduling difficulties only one centre received a visit - South Shore Regional Hospital in Bridgewater. Many thanks to all the approached centres for their flexibility and accommodation of APPHON and IWK needs. See you in the spring.

*Mickie Al-Molky RN, CON(C)  
APPHON Levels of Care Coordinator*

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## By-Laws Committee

Dr. Jack Hand, Vice Chair of APPHON/ROHPPA Board of Directors is looking to form a working group to update the APPHON/ROHPPA By-laws. Anyone who wishes to be on this committee please contact [carol.digout@iwk.nshealth.ca](mailto:carol.digout@iwk.nshealth.ca)

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## Our Vision:

To facilitate access for Atlantic province children and youth to comprehensive, current, effective, evidence-based hematologic/oncologic treatment delivered as close to home as safely feasible.

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Dear Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

The Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Service at the IWK Health Centre recommends the annual influenza vaccination of children who are immunosuppressed as well as their household contacts. These recommendations are based on statements made by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and Childrens Oncology Group (COG) and have been updated since the March 2005 APPHON Guidelines for Immunization were circulated.

The flu vaccine is recommended for children on active immunosuppressive treatment, within 12 months following completion of treatment or within 24 months following a bone marrow transplant. Household contacts of these children should also be vaccinated. The hematologist/oncologist may determine that some patients should continue to receive influenza vaccine annually beyond these guidelines.

In Canada the flu vaccine is not a live virus vaccine. Anyone may receive the vaccine regardless of blood counts without increased risk. Immune suppressed patients will have a blunted response to the vaccine and may remain susceptible to infection, though some protection is still conferred. The best practice is to administer the vaccine when the absolute lymphocyte count (ALC) and absolute neutrophil count (ANC) are each at least  $1 \times 10^9 /L$  (or  $1000/mm^3$ ). If the ALC and ANC are unlikely to achieve these levels, vaccination will still provide some protection and should proceed without undue delay.

Single doses should be given before the end of November and booster doses before the end of December, depending on availability of the vaccine. Although distribution of the flu vaccine is variable, extra efforts should be made to vaccinate as soon as is feasible.

If possible, the child should not be taking prednisone or dexamethasone for at least one week prior to administration of the vaccine (corticosteroids may decrease the effectiveness of the vaccine). If the child receives prednisone or dexamethasone for five days every 28 days, it is best to give the vaccine mid-cycle.

Table 1: Influenza vaccine schedule for immunosuppressed children and their household contacts.

Age	Dose	Number of doses
<b>less than 6 months</b>	-	not recommended
6 to 35 months	0.25 mL IM	1-2 doses*
3 to 8 years	0.5 mL IM	1-2 doses*
≥9 years	0.5 mL IM	1 dose

\* If previously vaccinated only 1dose is required. If a booster dose is required it should follow 4 weeks later.

Your collaboration in ensuring this vaccine is given through your office is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact the patient's Family Care Coordinator at (902) 470-8819. Please FAX us confirmation of administration of these vaccines at (902) 470-7208.

Thank you.  
Sincerely,

The Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Service team  
IWK Health Centre

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