

“Everyone involved in the process of finding me a doctor and in taking care of my health went above and beyond”

A patient shares her experience of going through the Chilliwack Division of Family Practice’s

Patient Attachment Mechanism

Emma*, a resident of Hope, is in her early 60s and has recently discovered three lumps under her left arm that feel like little sugar cubes. She is concerned that this development may be breast cancer. Cancer runs in her family and her mother succumbed to ovarian cancer in her early 60s. Since Emma does not have a family doctor, she goes to the Fraser Canyon Clinic Open Access in Hope to discuss her concerns; this is also where she accesses health care most often. The Fraser Canyon clinic is an open-access clinic for patients or visitors in Hope. It provides urgent access to care for attached and unattached patients in the community and is staffed by local physicians and nurse practitioners.

The doctor at Open Access provides Emma with care and recommends she undergo necessary tests to find out what the lumps are. He also encourages her to find a family doctor who could provide her with continuous care, which research suggests leads to better health outcomes.

Emma does not drive and traveling from Hope to Chilliwack for medical care would cost over \$100 each way for a taxi. It’s clear that she needs to find care closer to home. To help her find a local primary care provider who could provide ongoing care, Open Access staff give Emma more information about their Patient Attachment Mechanism called PAM. PAM is part of A GP for Me, a provincial initiative of the Government of BC and Doctors of BC. Residents from Chilliwack to Boston Bar can call PAM if they are looking for a family doctor or nurse practitioner and they will be put into the process of being matched to a provider.

Emma calls PAM and speaks to the Coordinator in charge of PAM process. Emma explains that she does not have a doctor, does not drive, and has recently discovered lumps under her arm that may be breast cancer. Expressing concern and compassion, the PAM Coordinator springs into action to find Emma a provider. The PAM Coordinator sends Emma the required intake forms, which Emma notes is straightforward and easy to fill out. The PAM Coordinator tells Emma that she can drop off the PAM Intake form with the staff at the Hope Medical Center, rather than trying to scan or mailing it back. This takes a weight off of Emma’s shoulders because the Hope Medical Center is not too far away. She explains that the PAM process has been “a Godsend”.

How did this happen? PAM works closely with the health care team at the Fraser Canyon Clinic Open Access and Hope Medical Center. As a result of this close collaboration, Emma was attached to a family doctor soon after returning the completed PAM intake form. Patients seeking care through PAM are prioritized, amongst other things, on the basis of their health care needs. Emma is accommodated so quickly due to her limited ability to access medical care outside of Hope, the possibility that her lumps under her arm may be breast cancer, and provider capacity in Hope.

Going into her first meeting with her new primary health care provider, Emma feels warmly welcomed and valued by the staff at the Hope Medical Center. She has a positive first meeting with her new family doctor and goes on to note the importance of having a primary care provider who knows you, your health concerns, and medical history best. This allows rapport, trust, and good communication to develop between the patient-provider and for the physician to provide the highest quality of continuous care

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possible.

Emma explains that “Everyone involved in the process of finding me a doctor and in taking care of my health went above and beyond.” She also appreciates that the doctors, medical staff, and PAM referred to her by her first name, making her feel very cared for when she felt distressed. Emma reflects cheerfully, “I never felt like a number going through this process, I always felt like a person. PAM and the doctors and staff at the Fraser Canyon Clinic and the Hope Medical Center let me know through their actions and words that I matter. ”

We’re very happy to report that after undergoing another series of tests ordered by her dedicated primary health care provider, it is confirmed that the lumps under Emma’s arms are benign and she does not have breast cancer. Emma continues to receive care from her family doctor and has developed a good relationship with him. She recommends other people in the community call PAM if they are looking for a primary care provider, adding that she “couldn’t have asked for a more caring service or a more knowledgeable team.”

If you do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, and are living in a community from Chilliwack to Boston Bar, please ‘call PAM’, the Chilliwack Division of Family Practice’s Patient Attachment Mechanism, at: 604-795-0034 (for residents of Chilliwack, Agassiz, and Harrison) or toll-free at 1-844-795-0034 (for residents of Hope and the Fraser Canyon).

**The patient has given permission to share this anonymous story and has reviewed the final story being it was circulated externally. A fake name is being used for participant privacy purposes.*

