

CLINICAL SPECIALIST RADIATION THERAPIST (CSRT) SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

Introduction

Based on the success of previous phases of the Clinical Specialist Radiation Therapist (CSRT) Project, Cancer Care Ontario (CCO) has received funding for the next phase, the *CSRT Sustainability Project*. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has formalized funding for this next phase to support the creation of new CSRT positions in centres around Ontario. At this time the CSRT Sustainability Project team at CCO would like to invite all centres in the province to submit *CSRT Implementation Plans*.

Background

In the face of the increasing burden of cancer and recognition of the increasing complexity of cancer care the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) has funded a series of projects to investigate a new health care provider role – the “clinical specialist radiation therapist” (CSRT) since 2004. The CSRT is a registered medical radiation technologist in the specialty of radiation therapy who brings advanced clinical, technical and professional radiation therapy competencies to the existing interprofessional health care team. The CSRT role has been shown to improve access to Radiation Medicine consultation as well the Quality of Care given to individual patients. The CSRT initiative aligns with many of the cancer system priorities in the province including the development of new innovative health care provider roles to contribute to effectiveness and efficiency of the existing system and ultimately improve health outcomes for patients in Ontario, as outlined in CCO’s Ontario Cancer Plan and as exemplified by the Models of Care initiative.

CCO has partnered with this series of Ministry-funded CSRT Projects because it believes that developing advanced practice for radiation therapy is an important and necessary development in a series of strategies designed to deal with the many pressures that exist in our radiation treatment programs.

The CSRT Sustainability Project phase is funded for a three-year period, focusing on several key elements related to long-term sustainability of the CSRT role in Ontario, including assisting with the integration of original and new CSRTs into the regional cancer program teams. Currently there are 7 active CSRTs in three cancer centres; the Project goal is to extend the role across the province in response to local need and in a locally sustainable way. To this end, the Project has acquired one-time seed money to assist departments harness this new initiative. This funding, set at approximately \$50,000 per new full-time CSRT position for up to 13 full-time

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positions province-wide, will help offset some of the start-up costs of deploying these new innovative positions for the period of one year (July 2012 – June 2013). This includes the internal resources that must be directed at developing and implementing a new CSRT position, as well as for the mentorship and one-on-one supervision that is required during the early stages of implementation.

The Project Integration Support Team is in the midst of informing regional cancer centres about the successes of the CSRT initiative, upcoming project activities and opportunities. The Team is conducting site visits with senior administrators and key clinical stakeholders to increase awareness of the CSRT role and promote the potential benefits that centres can realize from developing and implementing CSRT positions within their programs.

The Project Integration Support Team will be available to work with and provide a host of resources to centres who declare their intentions to participate in the Request for Plans for the CSRT Sustainability Project. A number of helpful resources, including an Implementation Toolkit and job description samples, are available on the [CSRT website](#). Submitting centres may find it helpful to connect with Managers in departments that already have CSRT positions to gain further insight regarding position development and sustainability planning. Centres interested in connecting with Managers of current CSRT positions should contact the Project Integration Support Team, who will direct them to the most appropriate resource.

The Team welcomes questions and discussions regarding proposed positions to further develop and modify draft plans as required. Centres are encouraged to share early concepts and draft plans with the Team for review and feedback before January 13th, 2012.

Contact the CSRT Project Integration Support Team:

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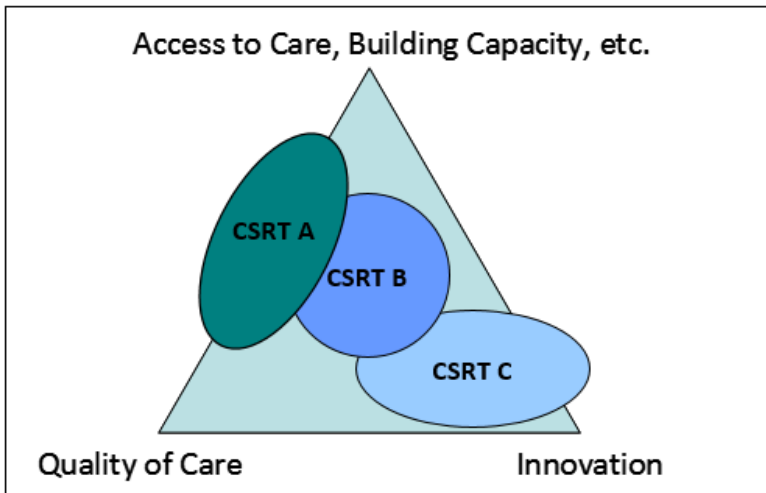
Activity	Target/Completion Date
Conduct provincial site visits	October/November 2011
Issue Request for Plans (RFP)	November 15, 2011
Deadline for RFP submissions	February 28, 2012
Review and select successful plans	March 31, 2012

Activity	Target/Completion Date
Implement new CSRT positions	July 1, 2012

Position Development, Metrics and Fiscal Sustainability Options

Maximum success for CSRT integration is achieved when positions are developed to clearly address specific local needs in the radiotherapy care pathway and when they include specific and measurable outcomes. During the pilot phases of the CSRT Project thus far, the impact and cost-benefit of positions operate in one (or more) of three key areas: increase in access to care (number of patients seen by a specific health care provider or by a team in a program/service), improvement in quality of care delivered and in promoting innovation. Positions can focus on one distinct area or be a combination of activities that bridge or blend across two areas (i.e. have some aspects that focus on improving quality of existing services, and some aspects that focus on acceleration of knowledge translation – See Figure 1 below). The gains may include, but are not limited to, building capacity in specific programs/patient populations, more rapid patient through-put in a specific portion of the patient care pathway, quality of care improvements (e.g. Imaging Specialist Role dealing with the increasing complexity of daily image matching on treatment units – a key component of modern day practice with IGRT) , increased patient satisfaction, as well as the enhancement of current services and innovation of new programs and services. Such gains may be difficult to quantify but support from the Project will assist departments with identifying the relevant metrics and tools.

Figure 1: Diagram demonstrating the various ways that CSRT positions can be built and focused amongst the three key areas of practice improvements.



To help ensure sustainability, it is important to measure the impact of positions as well as investigate available funding options and develop a plan for long-term financial support for the positions. Both when determining whether to apply for CSRT positions and performing long-term planning activities regarding the positions, it is important for centres to keep in mind that there

may, in fact, be RTTs already functioning in advanced positions and this opportunity would support the further development of those positions.

Metrics to Consider

- Measure and quantify activities performed by CSRTs which are traditionally performed by other health care providers (e.g. contouring/planning, follow up visits, consultations). If possible, identifying the additional activities that will be performed by other health care provider with the time saved by redistribution of specific activities (e.g. additional new consults).
- Quantify the number of additional patients seen due to the presence of the CSRT in the clinic/program (e.g. C1Rs, follow up visits)
- Consider quantifying/measuring some of the following indicators:
 - Educational activities transferred to CSRT, mentoring/student supervision, research/clinical trial activities (typically performed by research clerks), increase in Randomized Controlled Trials' (RCTs) accrual rates, increase in utilization from catchment area, decrease in inappropriate referrals, increase in achieving target CCO wait times, etc.
- Additional metrics which have been used in the past to measure the impact of CSRT positions include:
 - Competency assessment
 - Consensus/concordance studies
 - Safety data
 - Patient satisfaction
 - RT job satisfaction
 - Stakeholder satisfaction/burnout
 - Wait time data
 - Baseline data: "time on task" audits

Funding Possibilities

- Radiation Therapy operating budget
 - Changing the mix of staff in the radiation department when adding CSRT(s). This could decrease the overall number of staff in the department due to gains in efficiency, while at the same time improving the quality of care.
- Revenue generated from increased number of new radiation cases (C1Rs)
- Other provincial/federal funding envelopes – aboriginal/francophone initiatives, etc.
- Research grants where the CSRT role and specific research initiatives align

Request for Plans (RFP) Assessment Criteria

CSRT Implementation Plans from regional cancer centres applying for CSRT Project funding will be evaluated based on the predetermined plan assessment criteria (see below) by an “arm’s length” selection committee. The plan assessment criteria have been reviewed and approved by the CSRT Sustainability Project Oversight Committee prior to the province-wide issuance of the Request for Plans (RFP). The selection committee will be comprised of experts from inside and outside of the profession.

Applicant sites will be expected to provide evidence for each of the following categories, including any necessary supporting documentation. During the assessment process, the following plan sections will be weighted according to a distribution determined and approved by the Project Oversight Committee (see below).

1. Identification of Program Needs and Alignment with Key Priorities – 25%

- Description and characterization of local need(s) including new or existing data to support the gap, bottleneck or need for new service/innovation
- Alignment with various and diverse initiatives:
 - Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care objectives
 - Decreased wait times
 - Improved access to services
 - Increased interprofessional collaboration
 - Improved health of Ontarians
 - CCO initiatives including (but not limited to)
 - Increasing the % of patients that have been Peer Reviewed
 - Increasing the % of Radical IMRT courses to meet disease specific guidelines
 - Meeting wait times targets for Referral to Consult and/or Ready to Treat to Start of Treatment
 - Program/Departmental mission and vision or special initiatives as stated in internal strategic documents
- A statement regarding access to internal support and to resources (e.g. administrative support, IT support)

2. Description of the Position(s) – template provided – 25%

- Summary of position and expectation including a description of patient population or domain of practice and a description of its grounding in radiation therapy practice
- Core (critical) competencies as per CSRT Competency Profile and other relevant activities that support the efficacy of the position

- Implementation plan, including key activities of the CSRT and timelines, and responsibility
- Method of performance monitoring and ongoing assessment
- Finalized job posting for use should the plan be approved
- A statement regarding how union issues will be managed
- Plan for internal (existing team members, other stakeholders) and external communication (interdepartmental, public, etc.)

3. Outcome Measures – 25%

- Expected, observable indicators of success with clearly identified metrics for quantifying and characterizing impact

4. Sustainability Plan for the Position(s) – 25%

- Description of plans to address the sustainability of the position after the end of Project funding (after June 30th, 2013).
- Description of plans to address the sustainability of the position in the event of staff turnover (e.g. highly specialized roles for which there may be a limited number of individuals qualified to properly practice in the position).

5. Support for the Position(s) – Yes/No – mandatory for plan to be eligible

- Letters of support from
 - The Regional Vice-President
 - The Heads of the key radiation treatment program departments:
 - Radiation Oncology
 - Radiation Therapy
 - Medical Physics
 - The identified direct supervisor(s)
 - The Heads of other relevant departments as dictated by the nature of the position(s)
 - E.g. Nursing, Pharmacy, Social Work, etc.

Long Term Sustainability and Accountability Framework

It is expected that the cancer centres will integrate the CSRT positions into hospital operations in an ongoing way and ensure sustainable funding for the positions beyond the term of the Project. The Project team will work with departments to facilitate successful implementation as far as possible. In addition, to help centres adequately plan for the long term sustainability of CSRT positions and address challenges that arise during implementation, an accountability framework will be included in the agreements between CCO and the Hospitals whose plans are selected for the duration of the Project. This framework will identify how to access the necessary supports to assist in implementation issues that impact on the eventual success of local positions.