

Annual Meeting

The Heritage Center and State Museum in Bismarck, ND, was the site of our North Dakota Cancer Coalition annual meeting on June 24, 2025, followed on June 25 by the ND Colorectal Cancer Roundtable meeting. Our non-profit is off to a good start with 62 paid members, 49 of whom attended on the 24th and 38 attended on the 25th.



Photo taken Day 2, by Nancy Hostetter

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We thank Brian Halverson who finished his term as Vice Chair and Mary Stahl who finished her term as Secretary. We elected new officers: Sara Anderson from Essentia Health's Cancer Center in Fargo, ND, as Vice-Chair and Judy Beck from Quality Healthcare Associates Minot, ND, as secretary.

Our meeting was filled with informative sessions to enhance our work and fulfill our mission of reducing the burden of cancer in North Dakota. This was the first year CMEs were awarded: a total of 5.75 credits. Nancy Hostetter from the North Dakota Medical Association assisted with our CME approval process.

Jonathan Gardner led our successful effort to become a 501(c)3 Nonprofit and we are now able to 1) engage in policy development by educating and informing our legislators and 2) seek grants for our community projects. If you have a project in mind, please let us know at info@ndcancercoalition.org, and when a funding opportunity arises, we can submit for funding. Jonathan will also be chairing the Bylaws Committee to work on refining our organization's bylaws assuring compliance as a 501(c)3. If you're interested in participating in this important task, please let him know at jonathan.gardner@ndcancercoalition.org.

The presentations began with Dr. Jessie Lindemann highlighting how we can improve the work we do every day. She described how her diagnosis of Hodgkin Lymphoma propelled her career toward providing care to cancer survivors at her private practice. She provided her "top tips" and taught us how we can ensure our patients get the best care possible. Dr. Lindemann is leading our new Survivorship Workgroup; if you're interested in participating, contact info@ndcancercoalition.org.

Annette Clark, the Program Director for the North Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control Program, presented an overview of the North Dakota Cancer Plan 2025 – 2035, which will guide our work over the next 10 years. We will evaluate our progress at the 5-year mark and make adjustments to the plan, as needed. The timing couldn't be better to get our organization off to a great start.

Nikki Medalen of Quality Healthcare Associates presented canvas prints to the winners of the Turn ND Blue contest held in March, National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. Twenty-two total photos were submitted. The winners included:

- Hospital Category: First Care Health Center, with the slogan, "Your Missions, should you choose to accept it: Get Screened!"
- Ambulatory Care Settings: Heart of America Medical Center, with the slogan, "KISS: Keep it Simple – Screen."
- Non-Medical Worksites: Kat & Company, with the slogan, "Turn ND Blue (But Not Like That!)" Their photo depicted turning the State Capitol Building blue.

For the first time in 2025, the contest allowed the public to vote for their favorite photo, with Unity Medical Center's photo, "There are Things more Awkward than a Colonoscopy" receiving the most votes and lots of laughs.

Wade Swenson, MD, from Lakewood Health System in Staples, Minnesota described his work transforming rural cancer delivery, the challenges they overcame, and the opportunities they created to better serve the hematology and oncology patients in that region. He shared many insights we can adopt as we serve our rural communities.

Chun-Hung Chan, PhD, spoke about the Connect for Cancer Prevention Study, a collaboration between the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and several healthcare systems, including Sanford Health. This study is an investigation of the causes of cancer and how to prevent it. The study aims to enroll participants across the US and collect data through surveys, biospecimens, and electronic health records. This large-scale, long-term study will utilize new technologies and research methods to identify factors that may influence cancer development and inform prevention strategies. The ability to prevent cancer with these results will make our jobs easier.

Ben Hanson, the Government Relations Director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network for North Dakota gave an overview of this year's legislative activities related to cancer policy development. He provided tips on following legislative session conversations and the progress on bills. He gave tips to enhance our involvement in advocating for our patients to improve health outcomes in our state and beyond.

Several mini-presentations included Sara Anderson's report on the Essentia Health's Cancer Center's efforts to create education materials in various languages that target key points to promote timely cancer screening. Jill Ireland from the American Cancer Society (ACS) updated us on the efforts of the National ACS Roundtables and the North Dakota Lung Cancer and North Dakota HPV Vaccination Roundtables. These are patterned after the incredibly successful North Dakota Colorectal Cancer Roundtables and we look forward to similar progress with these groups. If you're interested in joining either of these Roundtables, email Jill Ireland: jill.ireland@cancer.org to join in this important work. Dr. Christina Tello-Skjersesteth spoke about her legislative advocacy for better coverage of breast cancer screening and diagnostic imaging and explained why these changes are essential, due to updated technology and understanding of the various contributing factors to breast cancer development. Her mother Mary Tello Pool, a breast cancer survivor joined and presented another patient perspective on how we can improve the work we do as a cancer coalition.

On Day 2, our ND Colorectal Cancer Roundtable meeting began with Jared Marquardt, MD, our NDCCRT Chair from Unity Medical Center in Grafton, ND, providing an overview of the state of our state's colorectal cancer progress.

To drive home the importance of what we do and to focus our attention on early-onset CRC, Patricia Monson portrayed the journey of her precious daughter, Rachel. In effort to not have other families live this tale, they started the "Live like Rach" nonprofit to raise funds to increase awareness and fulfill Rachel's wish that her mother not let early-onset CRC take other young lives. We learned the symptoms that need attention and early intervention with a diagnostic colonoscopy.

The use of stool-based testing is often more appealing to patients, more convenient, less expensive, and saves lives. The best test is the test that gets done, but the follow-up colonoscopy is an essential part of this 2-step screening process. Elizabeth Ciemins, PhD, presented her research findings regarding the implementation of a follow-up CRC screening measure. We learned about the barriers to this second step and how these researchers analyzed ways to improve this follow-up within a 90-day window in both rural and urban communities. We also broke into small groups to discuss ways we can implement what we learned by expelling myths and creating a barrier-free process to promote timely completion of that all-important second step: the colonoscopy.

The NDCCRT has several workgroups and Jill provided an update of the work they did:

- Developed messages targeted to unscreened and disparate populations.
- Host EHR "Super Users" webinars to share best practices in gathering and sharing data related to CRC screening.
- Provided professional education webinar on optimizing stool DNA tests.
- Recruited health systems and key stakeholders to assist in carrying out priorities.
- Developed "conversation starter" t-shirts which were sold in anticipation of the 2025 March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. (They raised approximately \$375 with this project.)
- Jonathan Gardner also provided a demonstration of his workgroup's efforts to create a Colonoscopy Wait Time Tool. This tool is available for anyone to view on the NDCC website.

Shawnda Schroeder, PhD, from the Department of Indigenous Health at the University of North Dakota School of Medicine & Health Sciences, spoke about the various challenges we have with rural colorectal cancer care in ND and how we can help this population get properly screened and receive the treatment they need. This information was reinforced by a panel presentation entitled Implementing Follow-up CRC Screening Measure in Practice and was moderated by Jesse Tran from the ND Department of Health and Human Services. The panelists were Tiffani Morman, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota; Jennifer Weiss, Sanford Health; and Stacy Wiest, South Central Health which provided a diverse perspective from payer, large-scale and small-scale providers, and an urban and rural perspective.

We had incredible support from our sponsors, reaching capacity for the exhibit hall. Julie Garden-Robinson had a display in the vendor area; she showed the winners of the Sun Safety contest held in May, National Skin Cancer Awareness Month, and sponsored by NDSU Extension. In addition, a slide show depicting all of the Turn ND Blue Photo submissions and the Sun Safety poster Contest winners was continuously running.

Thank you to the Sponsors and Exhibitors for Incredible Support of the NDCC and NDCCRT Meetings!

CORPORATE SPONSOR: EISAI US

Eisai's human health care mission, the desire to contribute to patients, is their corporate philosophy and the core of their business. Established in 1992, the HHC philosophy is a common value among all employees worldwide.



Spending time with patients and understanding their true needs has become the source of Eisai's innovation. With the introduction of EWAY 2025, our medium-term business plan, they updated their patient socialization program to include internal innovation training and enhance their commitment.

Also in EWAY 2025, Eisai selected two therapeutic areas of focus: neurology and oncology. In these areas, they believe it is important to find "Ricchi" – a Japanese term that means finding a place "where real patient needs are still unmet; where Eisai can become a frontrunner."

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NDCCRT NETWORKING BREAK SPONSOR:



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New Members Needed!

If you're working with someone who would benefit from the networking this coalition provides, be sure to encourage them to join the ND Cancer Coalition and participate in one or more of four Action Teams: Breast Cancer, Colorectal Cancer, Sun Safety and Survivorship. We are more powerful in numbers and we'd love to grow our coalition and the reach that we have in every community. [Become a member!](#)

Registration is Open for Two ACS NCCRT Virtual Events in July

MEMBERS-ONLY BLUE STAR CONVERSATION AND RURAL GUIDEBOOK WEBINAR

Join the ACS NCCRT at two signature virtual events in July by registering today for:

- **ACS NCCRT Blue Star Conversation, titled "2025 Supreme Court Case Update: How Braidwood v. Kennedy Could Affect Insurance Coverage for CRC Screening."** This members-only program, held on **Wednesday, July 9 from 1:00-2:00 PM ET**, will feature a non-partisan panel discussion of policy experts who will discuss the implications of the soon-to-be announced Braidwood v. Kennedy Supreme Court decision. After the presentation, participants will have an opportunity to discuss the implications of the case and outcome, including how it may affect their work and services. **[Register now](#)**
- **New Resource Webinar for ACS NCCRT CRC Screening in Rural Communities Best Practices Guidebook:** This webinar, held on **Monday, July 28 from 3:00-4:00 PM ET**, highlights this upcoming resource and covers an overview of recent data and statistics that illustrate the burden of CRC in rural areas, an outline of the five recommended steps to increase CRC screening rates in rural communities, and a deep dive into best practices and lessons learned from two of our five exemplary case study site interviewees. **[Register now](#)**

SEPTEMBER 9, FREE WEBINAR: SAVE THE DATE!

Joshua Richter, M.D. Assistant Professor of Medicine Tisch Cancer Institute Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, New York will present Advancing clinical expertise in CELMoDs: Transforming multiple myeloma treatment on Tuesday, September 9, 2025, from 12:00 – 1:00 PM CST. Register for this free CME/CE at

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_5WugxLUmR_aawVdbZvmjmQ

PLANNING FOR 2026

The ND Cancer Coalition and the ND Colorectal Cancer Roundtable are already planning our activities for next year, including our annual meeting. If you're interested in serving on committees, be sure to let us know by emailing Nikki Medalen at **nikki.medalen@ndcancercoalition.org**.

StayCONNECTED!



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[@NDCANCERCOALITION](#)

The NDCC has a facebook page of valuable information for your cancer prevention and treatment activities. If you have news to share there, contact:

Julie.garden-robinson@ndsu.edu



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