

Registered Nurse Lynda Watson has contributed not only the field of Hepatology, but the important and directly related nursing specialties of harm reduction and Hepatitis C for over 20 years. Lynda has been a CAHN member for many of those 20 years.

She began her hepatology career 26 years ago at the CUPS (Calgary Urban Project Society) Medical Clinic, an inner city clinic for people living in poverty and low income. Lynda was integral in developing and running the Hepatitis C Program at CUPS, working tirelessly to get HCV treatment for the cities most vulnerable and marginalized individuals. At the beginning of this journey, Lynda was able to engage countless clients and get them set up for HCV treatment. While these individuals worked their way through difficult interferon treatment, Lynda was a solid foundation to stand on; offering support, education, and her critical nursing expertise in order to maintain not only their physical health, but their emotional well-being as well. She worked “with” clients, not “for” them; a key for client buy-in and successful community engagement. Lynda also provided nursing care through a holistic lens in order to support individuals in curing the Hepatitis C virus, as well as ensuring they had housing resources, income support, access to mental health supports, and harm reduction teaching and supplies. Working with marginalized groups such as people who inject drugs, people who use substances, and those who are homeless, Lynda has been able to demonstrate her everlasting compassion in direct relation to society’s most vulnerable. Throughout her time at CUPS, Lynda developed support groups for clients, allowing a wide variety of individuals to feel supported before, during, and after their HCV treatment. She has incorporated World Hepatitis Day celebrations into the CUPS Hepatitis C Program annually, creating awareness and education throughout the wider community of Calgary. Lynda has attended countless liver conferences throughout the years, networking with other Hepatitis C programs across the globe to enhance and develop the programs offered at CUPS.

In addition to her work at CUPS, Lynda has also been involved in the Safeworks Harm Reduction program since its inception. With her direct Hepatitis C connection, Lynda was able to link the harm reduction and Hepatitis C worlds in order to appropriately decrease the incidence of new Hep C infections through needle exchange

programs and infectious disease testing. This was also a great connection as Lynda was able to track down difficult to find CUPS clients that needed Hepatitis C support and follow up, and offer a direct link to newly diagnosed hepatitis C clients to get started on treatment. Through working primarily with core transmitters of the HCV virus, Lynda has had a massive impact on the prevention, treatment, and follow up care of clients with Hepatitis C. Lynda takes great care in ensuring that once clients are treated for hepatitis C, that they are followed up with appropriately throughout the years in case of reinfection or changes in their liver status. Lynda has also contributed to numerous research studies advancing initiatives to gather more information on hepatitis C, access to treatment, and real world epidemiological data.

Lynda has been a strong mentor in the lives of new nurses by demonstrating passion, nursing excellence, and strong community engagement into their training. Lynda has been able to allow countless individuals in need of Hep C treatment access to low barrier, compassionate, and cutting edge treatments that allow them to live healthy and fulfilling lives. Lynda is a beloved member of the Hepatitis C community for both fellow co-workers and the individuals she works with. The positive ripples she has made in the lives of those living with Hepatitis C don't end with treatment completion; they continue on throughout the lives of these individuals that continuously state that "Lynda saved my life".

Lynda Watson has had a direct influence in changing the hepatology field through her continued advocacy for marginalized and vulnerable populations with Hepatitis C. Lynda has voiced the concerns, specific priorities, and challenges faced by these individuals in regards to Hepatitis C treatment in order to ensure treatment is affordable, accessible, and tolerated by people who use substances and low income individuals. With the high incidence of Hepatitis C in people who use drugs, it is critical that this population be not only taken into account, but valued in terms of pushing the boundaries forward for HCV treatment. Lynda's voice for this community is never wavering, and this has resulted in hundreds of Calgarians successfully completing HCV treatment and decreasing the number of liver cancer related deaths in the future. Lynda has worked hard to decrease the stigma surrounding HCV and increase knowledge of its treatment

options and potentially negative outcomes if not treated effectively.
There is no doubt that Lynda Watson has not only impacted, but
tremendously improved the discipline of hepatology nursing with her
passionate and selfless contribution.