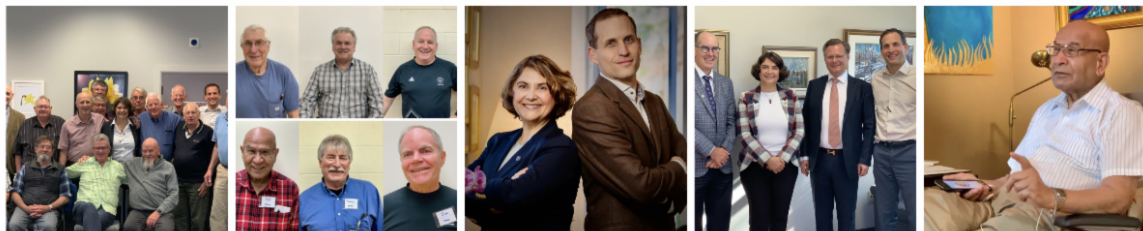




# Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PEP)

2025  
NEWSLETTER



**Dear Recipient,**

We are thrilled to share with you this year's **PC-PEP Annual Newsletter**—a celebration of growth, impact, and the inspiring community we've built together. Your support has played a vital role in every milestone we've reached, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

This past year has been transformative. We premiered **our first feature documentary, Empower** ([watch here](#)), to a standing ovation at Dalhousie

University—a powerful film capturing the healing journeys of cancer survivors and the impact of the Patient Empowerment Programs. We also **continued to publish rigorous scientific research**, validating the effectiveness of PC-PEP and CancerPEP in improving patient quality of life, mental health, and survivorship outcomes. We expanded our reach internationally, with a heartwarming and growing collaboration with the **Prostate Cancer Foundation of New Zealand, but also Romania, Belgium and South Africa**.

Closer to home, we are proud to partner with the **Aberdeen Health Foundation** to support **chronic disease management and patient empowerment in Pictou County**. Thanks to this collaboration, the program is now helping even more Nova Scotians lead healthier, more connected lives.

In exciting news, we've completed the **French translation** of our program and are working to open new PC-PEP sites across **Québec**, with heartfelt thanks to **Tolmar** for their generous support. This expansion ensures that **Francophone patients across the province** will soon have access to PC-PEP in their own language, bringing our vision of equitable care to life.

This momentum continues thanks to the recent **pan-Canadian Movember** grant, which is enabling us to expand our work with underserved and at-risk populations—including **Indigenous men, gay men, Black men, and rural men**—ensuring that no one is left behind in the cancer recovery journey.

Every step forward has been rooted in the belief that cancer care must be compassionate, holistic, and evidence-based. That belief has only been possible to realize thanks to the generosity of our donors—especially **Debbi and Frank Sobey**, whose vision and support through the **Soillse Endowment** continue to make this work possible. Their investment has touched thousands of lives in Canada and beyond.

We also extend our deepest thanks to our **participants**, who trust us during some of the most vulnerable moments of their lives. Many have become mentors, research ambassadors, and advocates themselves. You inspire us every day. To our team—**nurses, students, researchers, residents, clinicians, and community collaborators**—thank you for your tireless effort and dedication. Your work fuels this movement.

As co-founders, **Dr. Gabriela Ilie and Dr. Rob Rutledge** remain devoted to advancing the science and spirit of **patient empowerment**. From delivering free public talks to mentoring students and advocating for equity in care, their leadership continues to guide the evolution of PC-PEP with compassion and integrity.

We hope this newsletter offers a meaningful glimpse into what we've accomplished together—and where we're headed next. We invite you to read it, share it with those who may benefit, and stay connected with our journey. You may unsubscribe at any time by clicking the link at the bottom of the newsletter.

With heartfelt thanks,  
**The PC-PEP Team**



## PC-PEP is now Available in French!

We're excited to announce that the **Prostate Cancer–Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP)** is now fully **available in French!** French-speaking participants from anywhere are welcome to join the program.

PC-PEP is also launching at multiple hospital sites in the province of Québec, marking an important milestone in expanding access to supportive care across Canada.

Nous sommes ravis d'annoncer que le Programme d'Habilitation des Patients Atteints de Cancer de la Prostate (PC-PEP) est maintenant entièrement offert en français! Les participants francophones de partout sont les bienvenus à se joindre au programme.

PC-PEP est également en cours de lancement dans plusieurs établissements hospitaliers de la province de Québec, marquant

If you or someone you know is a French speaker and would benefit from this program, please visit <https://pcpep.org/fr/> or contact us at [PEP@nshealth.ca](mailto:PEP@nshealth.ca).

Prostate cancer empowerment is now just as accessible en français!

**PC-PEP  
EN FRANÇAIS!**

une étape importante dans l'élargissement de l'accès aux soins de soutien à travers le Canada.

Si vous ou quelqu'un que vous connaissez êtes francophone et pourriez bénéficier de ce programme, visitez le site <https://pcpep.org/fr/> ou contactez-nous à [PEP@nshealth.ca](mailto:PEP@nshealth.ca).

L'autonomisation face au cancer de la prostate est maintenant tout aussi accessible en français!

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## PC-PEP Awarded \$499K Health Equity Grant by Movember




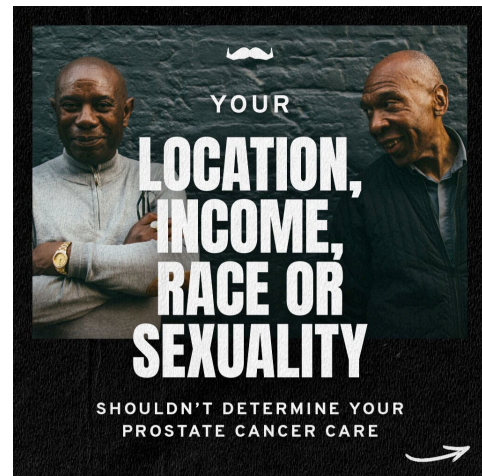
The work supported by our recent **Movember** grant is already well underway. We have successfully hosted our first community conference with members of rural and remote communities and are now translating those insights into meaningful action. A new **podcast series** ([watch here](#)) has emerged from this initiative—featuring **powerful stories and practical advice**—and a dedicated **cooking series for men in rural areas** is also in development, bringing accessible wellness education right to the kitchen table.

We are deeply thankful to Movember for awarding us this grant, which is helping us expand the reach of PC-PEP into more communities across Canada. This support allows us to create meaningful networks and tailored supports for **Black, Indigenous, rural/remote, and LGBTQIA+ men**—ensuring that no one is left behind in the cancer survivorship journey.

We remain committed to promoting awareness, supporting early detection, and enhancing men's physical and mental wellbeing. Together, we can change the story for all men with prostate cancer—and shape a more equitable, inclusive, and accessible healthcare system.


We are currently actively enrolling Black and Indigenous men in this next chapter of the program, and we invite all who are interested to connect with us. <https://ca.movember.com/story/prostate-cancer-health-equity-grant-winners>






# \$499K AWARDED

## DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY



Prostate cancer care looks different for each community. This grant will create networks for Black, rural/remote, Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ communities that will promote awareness, encourage screenings, offer support and enhance their overall health.



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**Exciting News! Release of our film "Empower"**

On May 4<sup>th</sup>, we released our documentary ***Empower***, which tells the powerful stories of **John Underhill and Melanie Smith**. Empower is the story of life after a cancer diagnosis – John and Melanie’s stories reveal how they found strength and purpose in light of a life changing cancer diagnosis. The film demonstrates the power of human connection, the impact of community, and compassion. We were also honoured to have their families at the event – thank you to Sandra, Jack and Alannah (family of John Underhill), and Melanie’s daughter, Delaney, for allowing us to share their stories.

To watch the documentary ***Empower*** [click here](https://www.cancerpep.com/empower/) and to learn more about the people behind this film, please visit: **[www.cancerpep.com/empower/](https://www.cancerpep.com/empower/)**


We would like to acknowledge that the film would not have been possible without our producers, **Drew McQuinn and Edward Boyd** – we could not have done this without you. Your hard work and determination make our vision a reality. We would also like to thank **Frank and Debbi Sobey**, who created the **Soillse Research Fund**, for their unwavering support throughout the development of the **Patient Empowerment Program**, and the film Empower. A heartfelt thanks also goes to the patients, clinicians, nurses, residents, students, and research staff, various collaborators, and research funders who contributed to this film. We are also deeply grateful to everyone that came to see the screening of Empower, whether it was in-person or online. Your support means the world to us.

**We would also like to acknowledge the passing of John Underhill (1963-2024), and Sean Smith (1965-2024).**





*"We are spiritual beings on a human journey, here to learn from and help one another. If what you're doing isn't helping others, you may be missing the point."*  
 - **John Underhill**

 Click the video on the right to watch **Empower!**

**Please note: Please feel free to share the link with friends—we hope you do! Just kindly avoid posting it on any public platforms, as the documentary is currently under review by film festivals, many of which have very strict rules about public sharing. Thank you so much for understanding!**



# PC-PEP Presentations and Conferences

## European Association of Urology Research Conference

Madrid, Spain (March 2025)

Extremely productive day at [#EUA25](#)! Two presentations, one Best Presentation Award, four exciting conversations about potential collaborations.

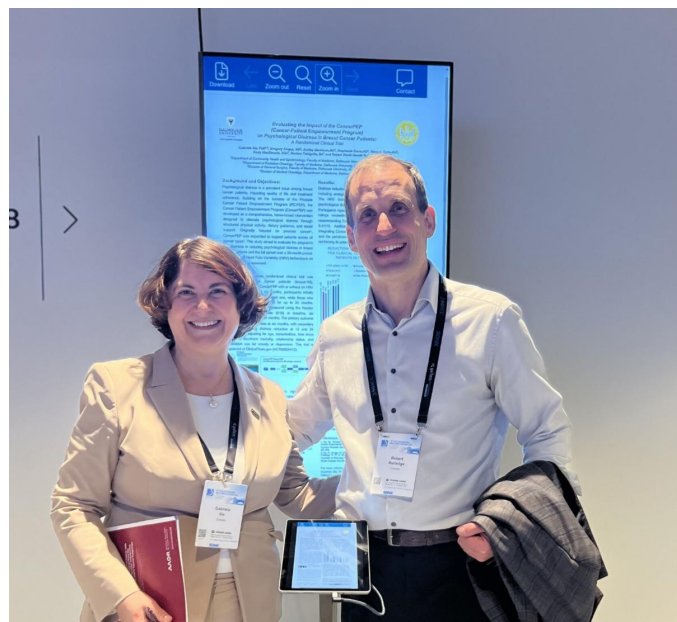
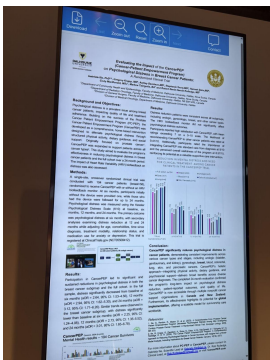




We are deeply grateful to our esteemed colleague and collaborator, **Dr. Alicia Morgan** from **Harvard University and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute**, for her kind words and for recognizing the global impact of our work, here are EAU25! Last year, we had the honour of presenting the **Mike Pandolfi Lecture** at Dana-Farber and Harvard—an incredible opportunity to share the PC-PEP program and connect with their exceptional team.



## 19th St Gallen International Breast Cancer Conference Vienna, Austria (March 2025)



## Prairie Urological Association Conference

Lake Louise, Alberta  
(February, 2025) with our  
Edmonton Site Lead urologist Dr.  
Howard Evans. ur



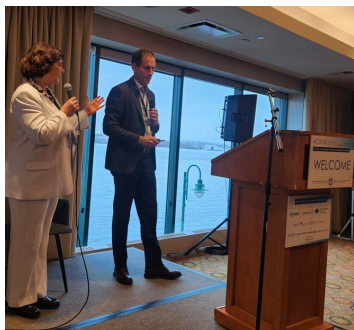
## Genitourinary Radiation Oncology Conference

Toronto, Ontario  
(January, 2025)

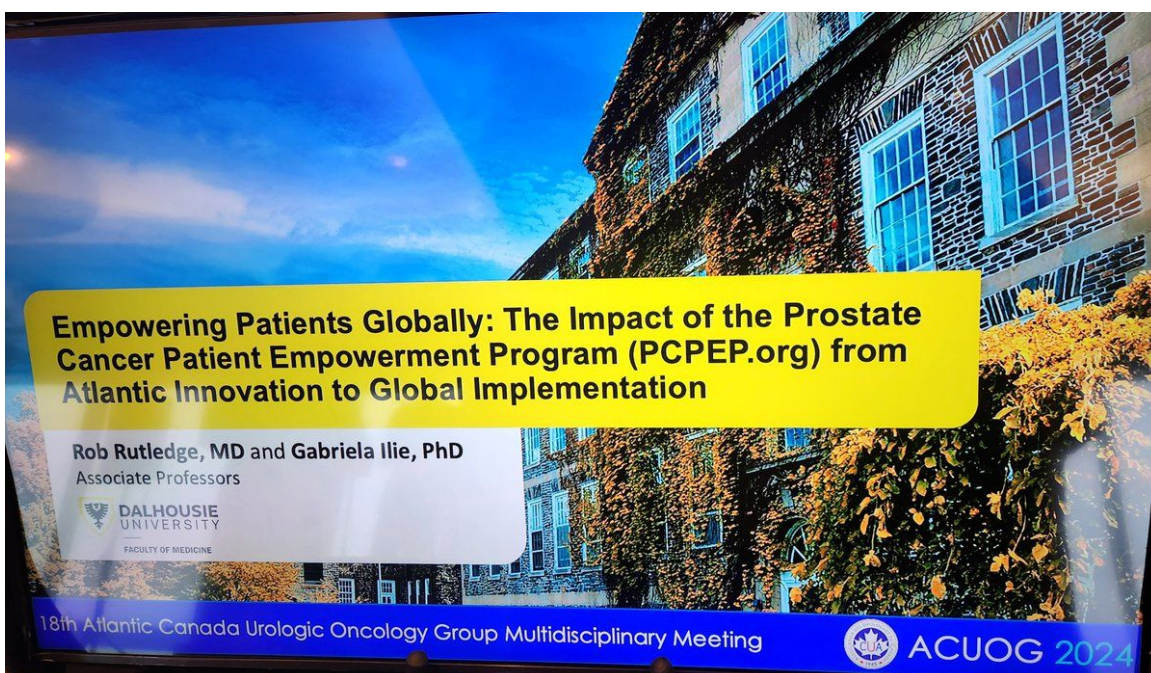


## 18th Atlantic Canada Urologic Oncology Meeting

Halifax, Nova Scotia  
(November 2024)







**Movember SHW**  
**Convening**  
Toronto, Ontario  
(October 2024)





## **ASCO Medisprof Conference**

**Cluj, Romania (September 2024)**

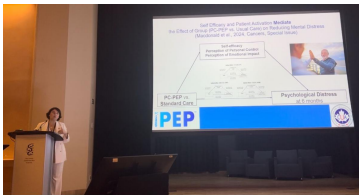
Huge thanks to Dr. Aadrian Udrea, Dr. Carolina Udrea, Julia Udrea (Thank you Team Medisprof !), and their amazing team in Romania for their dedication in translating and adapting the PC-PEP program. Medisprof put up an incredibly diverse and successful ASCO updates conference and we (Dr Rob Rutledge) are so deeply grateful to have been invited for a second year to talk about our CancerPEP programs. Your efforts are bringing this life-changing intervention to even more prostate cancer patients, and we couldn't be more excited about the impact!







**Canadian Urology  
Association**  
Victoria, British Columbia  
(July 2024)



## PEP in the Media

September 2024

### Nova Scotia Health:

Nova Scotia Health Innovation Hub releases a profile on Dr. Gabriela Ilie and her work with cancer patients, as well as chronic illness patients.

[CLICK HERE TO READ](#)

May 2025

### Global News:

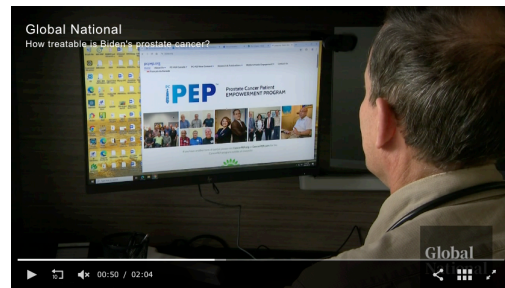
Interview with Research Citizen Ross MacDonald and Dr. Rob Rutledge on former President Joe Biden's diagnosis of Prostate Cancer.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH](#)

May 2025

## Aberdeen Health Foundation News:

The Aberdeen Health Foundation released an article on the success of Pictou County PEP.



[CLICK HERE TO READ](#)

## The Prostate Cancer - Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) Podcast

We are so excited to share something truly special: you can now hear and see the powerful, personal stories of our participants as they reflect on their journeys with prostate cancer. These **podcasts** go beyond interviews—they **offer raw, honest, and deeply human conversations that explore not just diagnosis and treatment, but also resilience, purpose, connection, and healing.** To learn more about this please visit: [www.pcpep.org/podcast](http://www.pcpep.org/podcast)

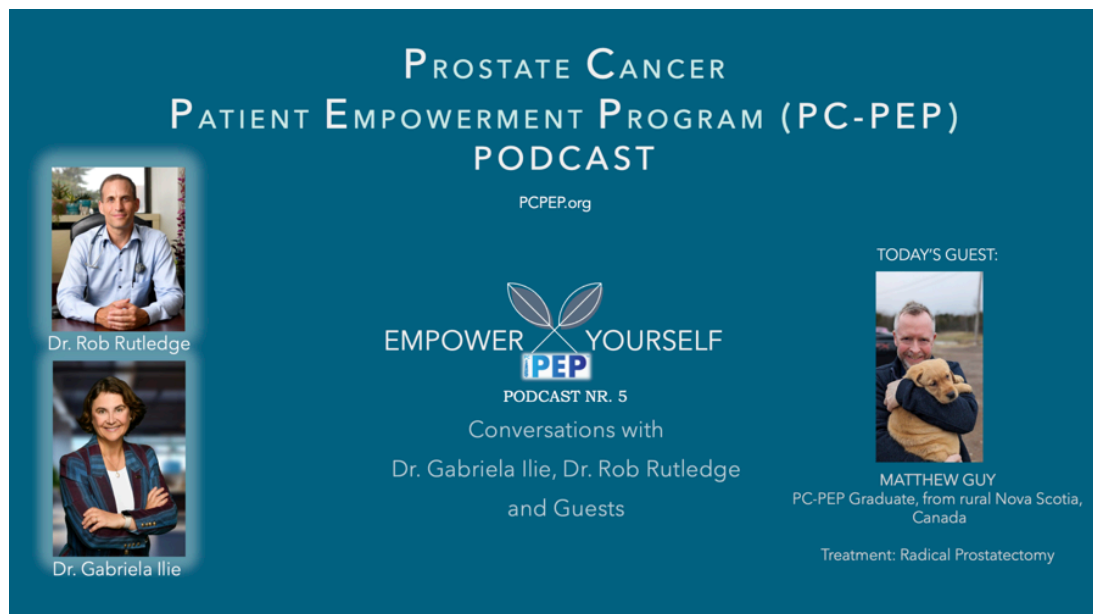
Each episode is available in both audio and video formats, so you can engage however feels right for you. We hope you'll take time to listen, reflect, and find a sense of empowerment in the courage and insights shared by our guests as they respond to some of the most meaningful and probing questions we've asked.

[Listen to our episodes on YouTube, Buzzsprouts, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, iHeartRadio and more!](#)

[Click Here to Listen to our Podcasts Now!](#)

[Click Here to Watch our Podcasts Now!](#)





### Episode 1 – “Don’t Let It Spoil Your Day!”

**John Moody** – New Zealand, Active Surveillance

**Themes:** Rural living, mindset, acceptance, daily resilience

*“When I heard the word ‘cancer,’ it shook me. But I decided early: I won’t let it spoil my day.”*

*“Living in rural New Zealand, I didn’t have access to big hospitals—but I had the power to take ownership of my health.”*

*“PC-PEP helped me see that doing something small—stretching, breathing, journaling—can shift your whole day.”*

### Episode 2 – “Up the Ladder—Finding Joy in Everyday”

**David Buckland** – Vancouver Island, **Canada**, Radiation + ADT, rural living

**Themes:** Treatment side effects, mental health, joy in routine, self-discipline

*“I was in the darkest place during treatment. But every rung on the ladder—each habit, each small step—brought me back to life.”*

*“I didn’t think joy was possible during cancer. Then I found it in the routine—waking up, showing up, connecting.”*

*“I wasn’t climbing alone. That made all the difference.”*

### Episode 3 – “Live Forward!”

**Joseph Lyndon** – UK/ now living in Ontario, **Canada**, Radical Prostatectomy

**Theme:** Hope and future-orientation, Black Men and prostate cancer

*“This isn’t just about the past or the cancer. It’s about what’s next—how I choose to live forward.”*

*“Every day, I ask: how do I want to show up for myself today? That’s the gift PC-PEP gave me.”*

### Episode 4 – “Early Detection Saves Lives”

**Kyle Tracey** – Ontario/Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Active Surveillance + Surgery

**Theme:** Proactive care and empowerment, young at diagnosis, Rural Canada

*“Getting tested early gave me time—and hope. It saved my life.”*

*“The earlier you know, the more power you have. That’s what this program gave me—my power back.”*



*"Hearing I had cancer at such a young age was terrifying. But catching it early meant I had options—and hope."*

*"This program helped me reclaim my sense of control. I didn't just survive—I stepped into life with more clarity and strength than before."*

### [Episode 5](#) – **"Finding My Voice: A Young Gay Man's Unexpected Path to Prostate Cancer"**

**Matthew Guy** – Rural Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Radical Prostatectomy

**Theme:** Young patients, unexpected diagnosis, advocacy, gay men

*"I never thought prostate cancer would be part of my story. But here I am—and I'm not hiding anymore."*

*"I used to feel like the only one. Then I met others, and now I feel strong enough to help someone else."*

### [Episode 6](#) – **"No One Should Go Through This Alone"**

**David Ashcroft** – Rural Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Radical Prostatectomy

**Theme:** Silence to Empowerment, LGBTQ+ inclusion, rural care

*"For years, I didn't talk to anyone about my diagnosis. Joining this group gave me my voice back."*

*"It wasn't just about surviving cancer—it was about learning how to live again, fully, honestly, and with others who understand."*

*"I used to think I had to go through this alone because I was gay. Now I know I'm part of something bigger—something healing."*

### [Episode 7](#) – **"Becoming More: A Problem-Solver's Journey from Prostate Cancer to Connection"**

**Kimble Meagher** – Rural Nova Scotia, **Canada**, Robotic Surgery + Radiation

**Theme:** Transformation, isolation to connection

*"I didn't realize how alone I had felt until someone simply said, 'I see you.' That moment changed everything."*

*"Before the program, I was surviving. After the program, I started living—with purpose, with people, with peace."*

*"This experience didn't just heal my body—it helped me grow a new way of being in the world."*

### [Episode 8](#) – **"What Do You Do When the Ground Shifts?"**

**Nick Aiken** – Rural **New Zealand**, Radical Prostatectomy

**Themes:** Young men with cancer, global connection, identity, grounding

*"When you're diagnosed young, it feels like the ground disappears. This program helped me find my footing again."*

*"Being part of a group that spans across countries reminded me—healing doesn't have borders."*

*"It's not just physical healing. It's healing your sense of self, your sense of purpose."*

### [Episode 9](#) – **"Out, Proud, and Healing"**

**Uli Holtkamp** – Germany/BC **Canada**, Brachytherapy + Hormones + External Beam Radiation

**Themes:** LGBTQ+ identity, empowerment, integrative care, emotional strength

*"I was out before cancer—but this journey made me even prouder of who I am."*

*"Being gay and navigating prostate cancer isn't talked about enough. That*

*silence can harm us. This group helped break it.”*

*“Healing happens when you’re seen, not just as a patient, but as a full person.”*

**Cancer PEP (Cancer Patient Empowerment Program)** is now commercially available for participants with all forms of cancers, and offers a comprehensive daily home-based 6-month Empowerment Program and life long monthly video conference participation. More information can be found by visiting: [CancerPEP.com](http://CancerPEP.com) Drs. Ilie and Rutledge continue to devote their time and efforts to expanding cancer patient care.

The CancerPEP program is offered **for free to patients through** the:

**1.Colorectal Cancer Resources & Action Network (CCRAN).**

[Click Here.](#)

**2.Kidney Cancer Foundation of Canada.** [Click here.](#)

**3.Southern Cancer Society of New Zealand.** [.Click here](#)

Click the button below to join us!



Click here to visit  
[CancerPEP.com](http://CancerPEP.com)

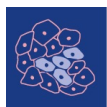


## Featured Lab Publications

### New Publication from CancerPEP!

Among 104 cancer patients, CancerPEP was shown to significantly reduce psychological distress and improve emotional well-being for cancer patients. In subgroup analyses, these benefits were seen across different cancer types, including breast cancer. These findings build on the success of PC-PEP, and show that supporting mental and emotional health is just as crucial as physical care.

Check out the full paper!



*cancers*

### Mediating Effects of Self-Efficacy and Illness Perceptions on Mental Health in Men with Localized Prostate Cancer: A Secondary Analysis of the Prostate Cancer Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) Randomized Controlled Trial

MacDonald, C., Ilie, G., Kephart, G., Rendon, R., Mason, R., Bailly, G., Bell, D., Patil, N., Bowes, D., Wilke, D., Kokorovic, A., & Rutledge, R. D. H. (2024). Mediating Effects of Self-Efficacy and Illness Perceptions on Mental Health in Men with Localized Prostate Cancer: A Secondary Analysis of the Prostate Cancer



*cancers*

### The Cancer Patient Empowerment Program: A Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Psychological Distress in Cancer Survivors, with Insights from a Mixed-Model Analysis, Including Implications for Breast Cancer Patients

Ilie, G., Knapp, G., Davidson, A., Snow, S., Dahn, H. M., MacDonald, C., Tsirigotis, M., & Rutledge, R. D. H. (2024). The Cancer Patient Empowerment Program: A Comprehensive Approach to Reducing Psychological Distress in Cancer Survivors, with Insights from a Mixed-Model Analysis, Including Implications for Breast Cancer Patients. *Cancers*, 16(19), 3373.



*Current Oncology*

### PC-PEP, a Comprehensive Daily Six-Month Home-Based Patient Empowerment Program Leads to Weight Loss in Men with Prostate Cancer: A Secondary Analysis of a Clinical Trial

MacNevin, W., Ilie, G., Rendon, R., Mason, R., Spooner, J., Chedrawe, E., Patil, N., Bowes, D., Bailly, G., Bell, D., Wilke, D., Zahavich, J. B. L., MacDonald, C., & Rutledge, R. D. H. (2024). PC-PEP, a Comprehensive Daily Six-Month Home-Based Patient Empowerment Program Leads to Weight Loss in Men with Prostate



Patient Empowerment Program (PC-PEP) Randomized Controlled Trial. *Cancers*, 16(13), 2352.

Cancer: A Secondary Analysis of a Clinical Trial. *Current Oncology*, 31(3), 1667-1688.

## Awards

### [Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology Innovation Award](#)

We are proud to share that **Drs. Gabriela Ilie and Rob Rutledge** have been awarded the Innovation Award by the Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology (CAPO). This national award recognizes the development of innovative clinical, educational, or organizational initiatives that improve the quality and performance of psychosocial cancer care or prevention. Their work through the Patient Empowerment Programs (PC-PEP, CancerPEP, and PictouCountyPEP) exemplifies this spirit of innovation—grounded in compassion, evidence-based research, and a commitment to patient-centred care.

### [Public Impact Award - Research Nova Scotia](#)

**Dr. Gabriela Ilie** has received the Discovery Award for Science and Innovation – [Public Impact](#), a distinction that celebrates research with meaningful contributions to Nova Scotia's economy, environment, society, or healthcare system. This award acknowledges Dr. Ilie's unwavering dedication, leadership, and selfless commitment to improving the lives of patients and communities across the province and beyond.



[Click here to learn more](#)



[Click here to learn more](#)





## Updates on PictouCountyPEP



PictouCountyPEP (PictouCountyPEP.org) is a 6-month home-based health promotion program to improve the physical and mental wellbeing of all adults in Pictou County, focusing on those who deal with chronic illnesses. The program has just finished all its data collection, and we look forward to sharing with you the scientific evidence behind its success soon! Keep an eye out for upcoming publications; we look forward to contributing to patient-centered care in this manner.

This work was made possible by the collaboration with the **Aberdeen Health Foundation**, who have contributed over \$100,000 to this project. Their support stems from their desire to improve the health of Pictou County residents, and we are so grateful to share that mission.



**Media Release**  
**PictouCountyPEP**

# PC-PEP Soillse Lab Team

## Coordinating Centre Research Staff and Trainees



**Dr. Gabriela Ilie, PhD (Soillse Lab Scientific Lead and Director)**, provides scientific, administrative, and content leadership for the Patient Empowerment Programs. She guides the research with both expertise and compassion, driving the lab's success and inspiring the entire team through her unwavering dedication to improving the well-being of participants and patients. In addition to leading the scientific direction, Dr. Ilie oversees the implementation of the PEP programs within clinical care, their expansion across Canada and internationally, and the supervision of students and staff. She is also responsible for securing operational and research funding, managing scientific grants, and coordinating activities across clinical sites. Her commitment to excellence and equity continues to shape the future of whole-person cancer care.

**Eva Abou-Samra** is an incoming

**Dr. Rob Rutledge, MD (Soillse Lab Clinical Lead and Co-Investigator)**, brings exceptional clinical expertise and heartfelt dedication to the leadership of the Patient Empowerment Programs. His compassionate approach to understanding and supporting patient needs has profoundly impacted the lives of many—and continues to shape the lab's commitment to person-centred care.

In addition to his clinical leadership, Dr. Rutledge actively contributes to content development, student and staff supervision, grant writing, site expansion, and the commercialization of the programs. His collaborative spirit and unwavering commitment to healing continue to elevate every aspect of our work.

**Cody MacDonald, MSc (Soillse Lab International Project Coordinator)** continues in his role to support and coordinate the lab's operations, all PEP programs, as well as in coordinating the spread of PC-PEP internationally. The research program would not be able to run without his dedication, hard work, and kindness, and we are immensely fortunate to have him on our team.

**Alice Bourne** is entering her third

master thesis student with Dr. Ilie that is working in the lab as a Research Assistant. We look forward to supporting her as she gets involved in PC-PEP, learns the PEP research methodology, and about analysis. Eva is the recipient of a CIHR C-GSM scholarship and we share her commitment to patient-centered healthcare.

**Calvin Butler** is a promising Master's student in Epidemiology and Applied Health Research supervised by Dr. Ilie. His thesis focuses on evaluating the cost-effectiveness of the Pictou County Patient Empowerment Program (PictouCountyPEP)—a community-based intervention supporting individuals living with various chronic diseases. Calvin has made significant progress in his thesis proposal and continues to contribute meaningfully to the lab's health economics research.

**Laura Burge** is a RIM medical student at Dalhousie University supervised by Dr. Ilie completing a research project titled "Changes in Stress Reduction Following a 28-Day Prostate Cancer - Patient Empowerment Program." Her hard work earned her 2 publications in respected scientific journals. She also presented her studies at a podium presentation at the CUA in 2024.

## Medical Residents

**Dr. Budoor Salman** is a urology resident working on the investigation of whether there are mediating effects between self-

year in Psychology at Dalhousie University and joined the Soillse Lab as a part-time Research Assistant over the summer. Alice is a bright and fast-learning student with a deep sense of care for participants. She has been contributing to the lab's operations, enrolling patients in our programs, and learning about qualitative analyses across the PEP programs. She is a valuable addition to the team.

**Stuart Murphy** is a medical student at Dalhousie University, working under Dr. Ilie's supervision on PictouCountyPEP manuscripts and getting them in shape for publication.

**Cory Burgher** is a RIM medical student at Dalhousie University working on a PC-PEP project investigating the improved relationship satisfaction among men with localized prostate cancer. Cory published her project in Current Oncology.

**Dr. Becky Power** is a urology resident working on the investigation of whether there are mediating effects between self-



reported urinary and sexual function to the treatment timing of PC-PEP and mental health.

**Dr. Liam Power** is a urology resident that is worked with Dr. Ilie on a project to understand the medical complexities in in-patients in urology over time that was published in CUAJ. He is the recipient of the 2023 Dr. Carl Pearlman Prize in Urology.

**Dr. Wyatt MacNevin** is a urology resident working with Dr. Ilie on investigating physical function following PC-PEP compared to standard of care as part of a secondary analysis of the randomized controlled trial. He is the recipient of the 2025 Resident Award at the Dalhousie Research Day, the 2022 Dr. Carl Pearlman Prize in Urology, and the 2024 Dr. S.A. Awad Resident Research Award. His work has been published in Cancers.

## Student Volunteers

**Sophie Leblanc** joined the Soillse Research Lab for Cancer Survivorship & Patient Empowerment in October 2024 and has been contributing through French translation of study materials and offering general support to the team.

**Liam-Patrick Hagerman** currently works as a Research Assistant with Nova Scotia Health and volunteers with the Soillse Research Lab for Cancer Survivorship & Patient Empowerment. Liam has contributed to translating PCPEP

reported urinary and sexual function to the timing of PC-PEP and mental health.

**Dr. Emily Chewdrawe** is a urology resident that is working with Dr. Ilie on a project that looks to analyze the effects of mediation to the adherence of pelvic floor muscle training in men with localized prostate cancer. She is the recipient of the 2021 Dr. Frank G. Mack Prize in Urology.

**Dr. Martha Foley** is urology resident working with Dr. Ilie investigating the impact of PC-PEP on quality-of-life years (QALYs) as a secondary analysis of a randomized controlled trial. She is the recipient of the Doctors of Nova Scotia Research Day Prize and the 2023 Dr. Frank G. Mack Prize in Urology.

**James Langley** is a second year Queen's University first joined the team in April of 2024 and has helped us by leading some live strength sessions for all PEP programs, and has continued his contribution to the team.

**Elizabeth Langley** is a graduate from Queen's University and she first began volunteering with Soillse Prostate Cancer Research lab in early 2024, and has assisted us in creating promotional content, and has been volunteering with other tasks to support our program.

study-related and patient-facing materials into French.

## Recently Graduated Team Members

**Markos Tsirigotis** (Soillse Lab Program Coordinator)

**Lia Massoeurs** (Soillse Lab Research Coordinator) has successfully defended her MSc thesis in Epidemiology and Applied Health Research titled “Exploring the complexity of mental health outcomes: a realist evaluation of qualitative interviews with prostate cancer patients in the phase 3 randomized clinical trial of the prostate cancer-patient empowerment program (PC-PEP).” She is the recipient of the 2024 Annual Nova Scotia Oncology Abstract Award, a CIBC/QEII CRTP Awardee, and a BHCRI studentship award winner.

**Dr. Tarek Lawen** is an urologic fellow at the MD Anderson Cancer Center that worked on the social determinants of health among prostate cancer re-survivors. He is the recipient of the 2019 Dr. Frank G. Mack Prize, 2022 Dr. S.A. Awad Resident Research Award and co-recipient of the 2024 Dr. Richard W. Norman Clinical Award. Tarek has helped and continues to remain engaged with

**Alexandra Nuyens** (Previous Soillse Lab Research Assistant) has successfully defended her MSc thesis in Epidemiology and Applied Health Research titled “A cost-effectiveness analysis of the prostate cancer patient empowerment program.” She was the recipient of the Killpatrick trust and QEII Foundation Diversity in Health Bursary, and the Silver Award at the ICAM Research Poster Competition.

**Dr. Ashley Robinson** is a surgery resident supervised by Dr. Ilie who defended her thesis titled “Relationship between hospital surgical volumes and length of stay for index conditions in Pediatric Surgery: A Canadian population-based study. She is the recipient of the 2024 DOS best resident presentation and FoM Resident Research Award for her thesis work.



## A Special Thank you

With Deep Gratitude

A heartfelt thank you and lots of love to our patients, incredible collaborators, mentors, research citizens, students and staff — your support, wisdom, and partnership have made all the difference.

**We are especially grateful to:**

Peter Dickens, Dr. Renée Bultijnck, Dr. Adrian A. Udrea, Dr. Duvern Ramiah, Dr. Rob Thompson, Dr. Christopher J.D. Wallis, Dr. John Thoms, Dr. Howard Evans, Dr. Kunal Jana, Dr. Susan Ellard, Dr. Larry Pan, Dr. Mark Corkum, Dr. Ernest Chan, Nick Aiken, Ross Macdonald, Pat Macdonald, Bennie Petolas, Kevin Barnett, Jerome and Colette Noseworthy, and John Demmings.

Your contributions continue to shape this work — thank you for walking this path with us.

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We would like to take this opportunity to **THANK** our 2024-2025 funders and donors for making possible all the clinical, residents, nursing, patient and community education related activities we delivered. **THANK YOU** to **Frank and Debbi Sobey, Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation/DMRF Soillse Research Fund** (now operated by **Dalhousie University's Faculty of Medicine Advancement Office**), **Movember, TOLMAR Pharmaceuticals, Bayer Pharmaceuticals, Knight Pharmaceuticals, the Aberdeen Health Foundation, TERSERA, Healing and Cancer Foundation, Pictou County Prostate Cancer Support Association, Prostate Cancer Support Group Toronto.**







## **With Heartfelt Thanks,**

We extend our deepest gratitude to all the patients and partners who have participated—and continue to participate—in our research studies. Many of these partners have taken on the roles of mentors and Research Citizen Leads, and their unwavering support and leadership have been invaluable to the growth and success of our programs.

Since 2019, we've hosted **monthly scientific updates and video conferences on the first Tuesday of each month, from 7:30 to 8:30 PM Atlantic Time.** These sessions continue to serve as an anchor for our community. **Prior to the main session, we offer group-specific gatherings from 6:30 to 7:30 PM, including meetings for men new to the program, Black men, gay men, and other affinity groups.** We warmly welcome suggestions for additional groups, including partners and Indigenous men, as we strive to tailor support to the unique needs of all participants.

We are thrilled to see continued participation from our **New Zealand members, with vibrant friendships blossoming through Facebook and the breakout rooms. Several of our Māori and Pacifica participants have shared how meaningful these sessions are, and we look forward to expanding our programming for these communities as recruitment grows.**

We've also launched a **6:30 to 7:30 PM Atlantic Time Research Citizen Leads groups.** This session has been especially valuable for newcomers, **men from rural or remote areas, younger men diagnosed before age 50, and others seeking connection and support.** Additionally, we now host a dedicated group for our **2SLGBTQ+ and MSM communities,** and we are actively organizing new groups for **Black/African Canadian and Canadian Indigenous participants,** as well as **younger men diagnosed with prostate cancer.**

We are planning to start a monthly video conference for our patients in **South Africa** and will be making an announcement soon.

Tailoring our programming to meet the diverse needs of our participants is a core value. We will continue reporting on the evolution of these initiatives over the coming year. **For more information, please contact Cody MacDonald at [pep@nshealth.ca](mailto:pep@nshealth.ca).** Health equity remains a priority for our entire team. In addition to PC-PEP, we host monthly CancerPEP and Pictou County PEP video conferences on the third Tuesdays of each month, from 7:30 to 8:30 PM Atlantic Time. Weekly PEP live events and activities for all program participants are also ongoing—please visit the Extra Resources page of the program for

details. These one-on-one and group connections continue to be a source of inspiration and healing for all involved.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to **Frank and Debbi Sobey**, whose vision and generosity have sustained our lab's research and operations over the past eight years. Their belief in innovative cancer care has helped make this work possible.

**We also thank our dedicated funders, including:**

Movember (Health Equity Fund), Research Nova Scotia (PC-PEP Phase 3 Randomized Clinical Trial), Beatrice Hunter Cancer Research Institute (cancer population surveillance research), New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF) (arsenic-related cancer toxicity work), and all the generous donors who continue to support our research.

Finally, we extend a warm thank you to our Research Citizens, Research Citizen Leads, Mentors, and community members who have walked this path with us from the very beginning. Your involvement has been vital in reaching and supporting cancer patients everywhere, and in shaping the future of survivorship research.

With heartfelt thanks,

Gabriela, Rob, and the entire Soillse Empowerment Research Lab Team  
Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine

## Want to Learn More?

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