

MY STORY

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What precipitated my participation in Patient Voices Network (PVN) as a Patient Partner?

About a decade ago, a number of health care issues started popping up in my life, in spite of living a healthy lifestyle my whole adult life. But I began to realize that age tends to impose itself on everyone one way or another. Or, as my husband likes to say: “As we age, our earth-suits start to wear out”.

Unfortunately, when I sought health care—I quite often fell through the cracks, and either didn’t receive the care that I needed, or alternatively, didn’t receive very good health care. At one point, I fell into a **crevice instead of a crack** and came very close to losing my life because of it.

Once I recovered from that scary incident, I started to wonder what I could do to ensure that no one else would ever have to go through such a horrendous, painful experience similar to mine. *That’s when serendipity stepped in!*

At the time, I had just recently signed up to receive a virtual newsletter that listed volunteer opportunities in Prince George. My parents had always been amazing examples to me of community service—spending countless hours during my childhood and beyond—helping others. In fact, my Dad still volunteers and he’s almost 87! So I looked over the first newsletter I received in my email and something called *Patient Voices Network* (PVN) caught my eye. I had never heard of this organization before. It turned out that it was a provincial organization started by BC’s Ministry of Health, run by BCPSQC (*now known as HQBC), in which members of the public could work **with** the healthcare system to enable positive change within it. That was the beginning of my journey as a PVN Patient Partner.

Since then, I have worked with my local health authority, as well as with provincial groups many times over the past 9 years. I've participated in many ways, at many levels of the healthcare system. Currently—I'm on my 3rd year working with BCIT's SoHS programs as their Patient Partner Lead, liaison, and am involved in peer-to-peer mentoring. Myself and other Patient Partners are ensuring that a true PFCC type of training takes hold in their students—the future health care professionals of BC.

Patient Partners contribute their lived expertise to many things: working with committees, writing applicable curriculum, and guiding documents, co-facilitating orientations and workshops—and much, much, more!

I'm also working with NH's PQI program as their Patient Partner Advisor. Since I've been working as a Patient Partner for so long—I have chosen to only work with groups now that I feel will effect change in an authentic manner. And I feel fortunate to be able to do that.

Many times, in my journey as a dedicated Patient Partner endeavoring to do my part to co-create better health care in BC, others have tried to discourage me, saying things directly or intimating that it is a waste of my time, since any healthcare system is usually a behemoth—complex and difficult to change. But I have rarely been discouraged in all the years that I've partnered with health care groups, since that famous quote by Hannibal tends to spring to mind: *"Either I will find a way, or I will make one."*

That's how I feel regarding changes needed in health care: I'm determined to help get it done no matter the obstacles. And NO, I'm *not* quoting the movie character Hannibal Lector—I'm referring to the Hannibal of 247 B.C.E. that was the leader of a powerful North African army that warred with Rome. When others tried to discourage him from pursuing his goal of defeating Rome, he was known to be extremely tenacious in trying to take the Romans down. In my case, I'm not trying to take anything down—except the obstacles keeping patients from receiving the best care possible, and hopefully, along with that, ensuring that health care professionals can work in happier, healthier settings.