

Benny Rana - University of Calgary

Project: Addressing disparities among racially and ethnically diverse individuals living with and beyond head and neck cancer

Background:



AbSPORU Project Description

Head and neck cancers (HNC) are the seventh most common cancer globally, with the incidence continuing to rise. HNC is often diagnosed at a later stage, necessitating complex, multimodal treatment from a multidisciplinary team. Certain groups are disproportionately burdened by HNC. Studies show that there are disparities in patient outcomes based on factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Furthermore, there is a noticeable gap in our understanding of factors that contribute to these disparities, especially in Canada; most of the existing studies have been conducted in the USA, which may not be generalizable to Canada. This hinders the development of strategies to increase equitable cancer care in Canada.

My project came from my personal experiences as a caregiver navigating cancer care, through my volunteer roles interacting with individuals living with and beyond cancer, and with my academic training. Through these roles I am acutely aware of the issues faced by marginalized patients in accessing resources. My proposed research project will work toward addressing equity, diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility within cancer care. This patient-orientated research will actively engage individuals with lived experience as equal partners on the research team to ensure the research addresses patient-identified priorities. We will use a mixed methods design to achieve our objective. Collaborating closely with our patient advisory council, we will recruit a patient partner and caregiver, ensuring their involvement at every stage of the project, tailored to their preferred level of engagement.

My proposed PhD thesis is to understand the complex role race and ethnicity have in HNC care and outcomes, to inform strategies to reduce inequities in HNC care and to improve outcomes for ALL patients. To achieve the aims of my thesis, we will conduct a mixed-methods study that will include: 1) a systematic review, to synthesize the existing evidence to explore the association between race and ethnicity and oncologic outcomes; 2) a retrospective study design, to quantify the association between race and ethnicity and quality of care and patient outcomes in Alberta; and 3) a qualitative study, to understand the lived experience of patients with HNC cancer belonging to an equity-deserving group. The outcome of these studies will be a better understanding of the complex role race and ethnicities have in HNC care and the effect on patient outcomes, as well as recommendations for interventions to improve equity among ethnically diverse patients living with and beyond HNC.

AbSPORU Student Bio

Benny Rana is a first-year PhD student in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary, specializing in Health Services Research. With a strong interdisciplinary background, she holds a Master of Public Health from the University of Saskatchewan and a Master of Science in Kinesiology from the University of Calgary, where she specialized in health, exercise, and sport psychology.

Her research focuses on addressing disparities in cancer care through the lens of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. She is committed to bridging gaps in healthcare accessibility and ensuring that equity-deserving populations receive equitable cancer care services.

Overall, her work is driven by a deep commitment to advancing health equity and improving patient-centred care in oncology.