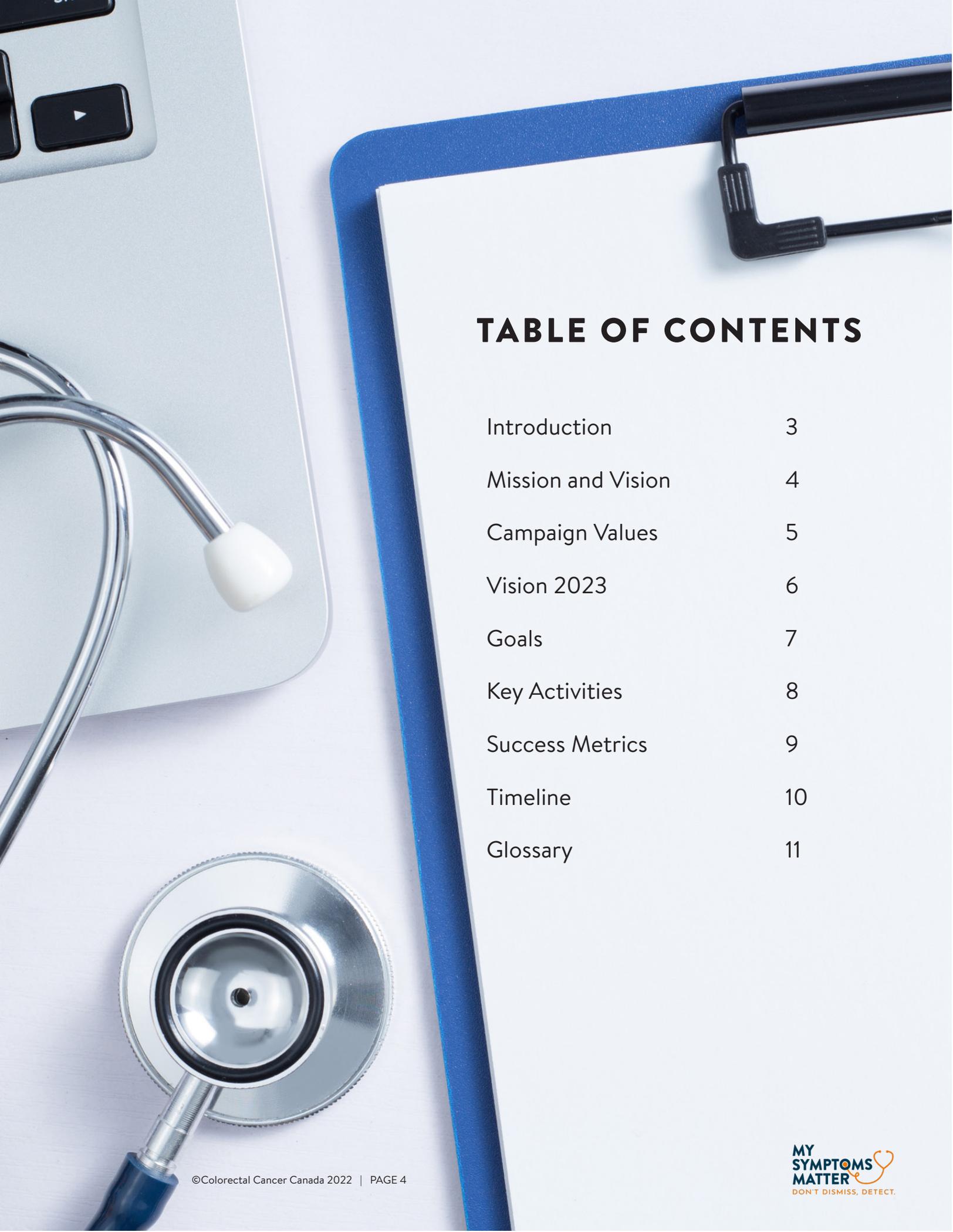




**MY  
SYMPTOMS  
MATTER**   
**DON'T DISMISS, DETECT.**



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# INTRODUCTION

Rates of colorectal cancer are rising sharply among young and middle-aged individuals, while rates continue to decline in adults aged 55 and over. Since 2003, across Canada excluding Quebec, the incidence of colorectal cancer has been increasing at 2.84% and 2.26% annually for men and women under 50 years of age respectively.

Dismissal of symptoms and delayed diagnoses is witnessed across colorectal cancer patients of all ages with a slightly higher prevalence in early age onset adults. Although a multitude of factors can be responsible for the rise in early age onset colorectal cancer, leniency in diagnosis and care owing to their age is felt by many patients. Young people are often diagnosed at a later stage because they aren't getting screened, and doctors don't necessarily suspect cancer to develop at a young age. Young adults, especially those with a family history of colorectal cancer, may also be at higher risk for diagnosis. About 30% of early onset colorectal cancer cases develop in individuals with a family history for the disease or who have a genetic predisposition. Delayed diagnoses could lead to advancing of the cancer that eventually requires complex long-term therapies and yet may have poor prognoses.

Therefore, it is important to ensure young patients receive the right care at the right time. Patients' family practitioners are

generally the first point of contact with the health care system to seek treatment for their symptoms. Sensitizing the family practitioners and primary health care providers to the red flag symptoms of colorectal cancer can help prevent dismissal of potential diagnoses.

Due to the screening interruption in the first three months of COVID-19, Canada is expected to have missed approximately 10,000 people with undetected adenomas and colorectal cancers<sup>2</sup>. It is predicted that this will lead to increased advanced adenomas which are harder to treat and ultimately increased mortality. Therefore, especially during these times, it is essential to sensitize family practitioners to recognizing the signs and symptoms, and similarly have patients educated about them to avoid late diagnoses.

To address the rising incidence of colorectal cancer in young individuals, Colorectal Cancer Canada has launched the "My Symptoms Matter Program" that aims to sensitize family practitioners and primary health care providers on early detection and evaluation of colorectal cancer signs and symptoms. The program is also directed to raise awareness among the public and educate them about self-identification of colorectal cancer symptoms and self-advocacy for care.

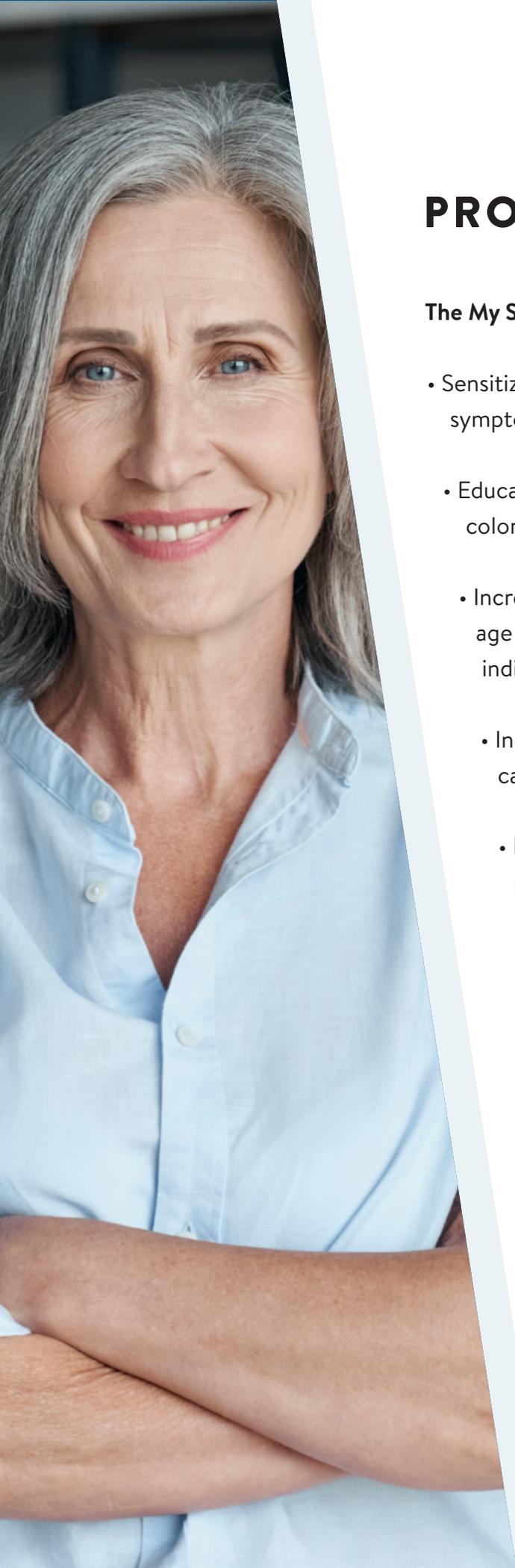
O'Sullivan DE, Hilsden RJ, Ruan Y, Forbes N, Heitman SJ, Brenner DR. The incidence of young-onset colorectal cancer in Canada continues to increase. *Cancer Epidemiol.* 2020 Dec;69:101828. doi: 10.1016/j.canep.2020.101828. Epub 2020 Sep 28. PMID: 32998071.  
2 Yong JH, Garner RE. Colorectal cancer screening during the COVID-19 pandemic: Impact of paused screening and evaluation of strategies to reduce delays StatCan COVID-19: Data to Insights for a Better Canada. Statistics Canada; 2021.

## MISSION + VISION

The mission of Colorectal Cancer Canada's My Symptoms Matter Program is to sensitize family practitioners and primary healthcare providers on the prevalence of colorectal cancer as well as the early detection of colorectal cancer signs and symptoms. The My Symptoms Matter Program also aims to educate the public to self-identify symptoms of colorectal cancer in a timely manner and discuss them with their family practitioners for further evaluation and possibly referral to a specialist.

Colorectal Cancer Canada envisions a future where no person in Canada dies of colorectal cancer due to a lack of awareness, misinformation, testing delays or stigma. We hope to prevent the dismissal of symptomatic or high-risk individuals for colorectal cancer in primary healthcare due to their young age or apparently healthy image. The My Symptoms Matter Program will lead to early detection of colorectal cancer at first contact, thereby improving prognosis and decreasing mortality.





## PROGRAM VALUES

**The My Symptoms Matter Program is dedicated to:**

- Sensitizing family practitioners to earlier detection of signs and symptoms of colorectal cancer
- Educating the public to self-identify symptoms of early age onset colorectal cancer
- Increasing public awareness of the rising prevalence of early age onset colorectal cancer and heightened risks specifically for individuals with a family history/genetic predisposition of cancer
- Increasing public awareness of the rising prevalence colorectal cancer and heightened risk factors to encourage early screening
- Encouraging early screening and detection for symptomatic patients with a history of risk factors/comorbidities
- Creating synergy between patients and primary care providers to improve earlier detection of colorectal cancer
- Improving equity and equality in accessing timely care for colorectal cancer patients irrespective of age
- Enhancing national and international partnerships with family practitioners to improve patient experiences and outcomes

# VISION 2023:

As a Cycle:



Family practitioners sensitized to prevalence and symptomatology of early age onset colorectal cancer



General public, patients, caregivers and family practitioners have access to toolkits and educational material regarding prevalence of colorectal cancer in early age onset individuals and the need for timely care



Leads to early detection of CRC at first contact



Earlier detection of earlier stages



**IMPROVED PROGNOSIS, REDUCED MORTALITY, INCREASED SURVIVAL RATE AND/OR IMPROVED QOL FOR CANCER PATIENTS IN CANADA**

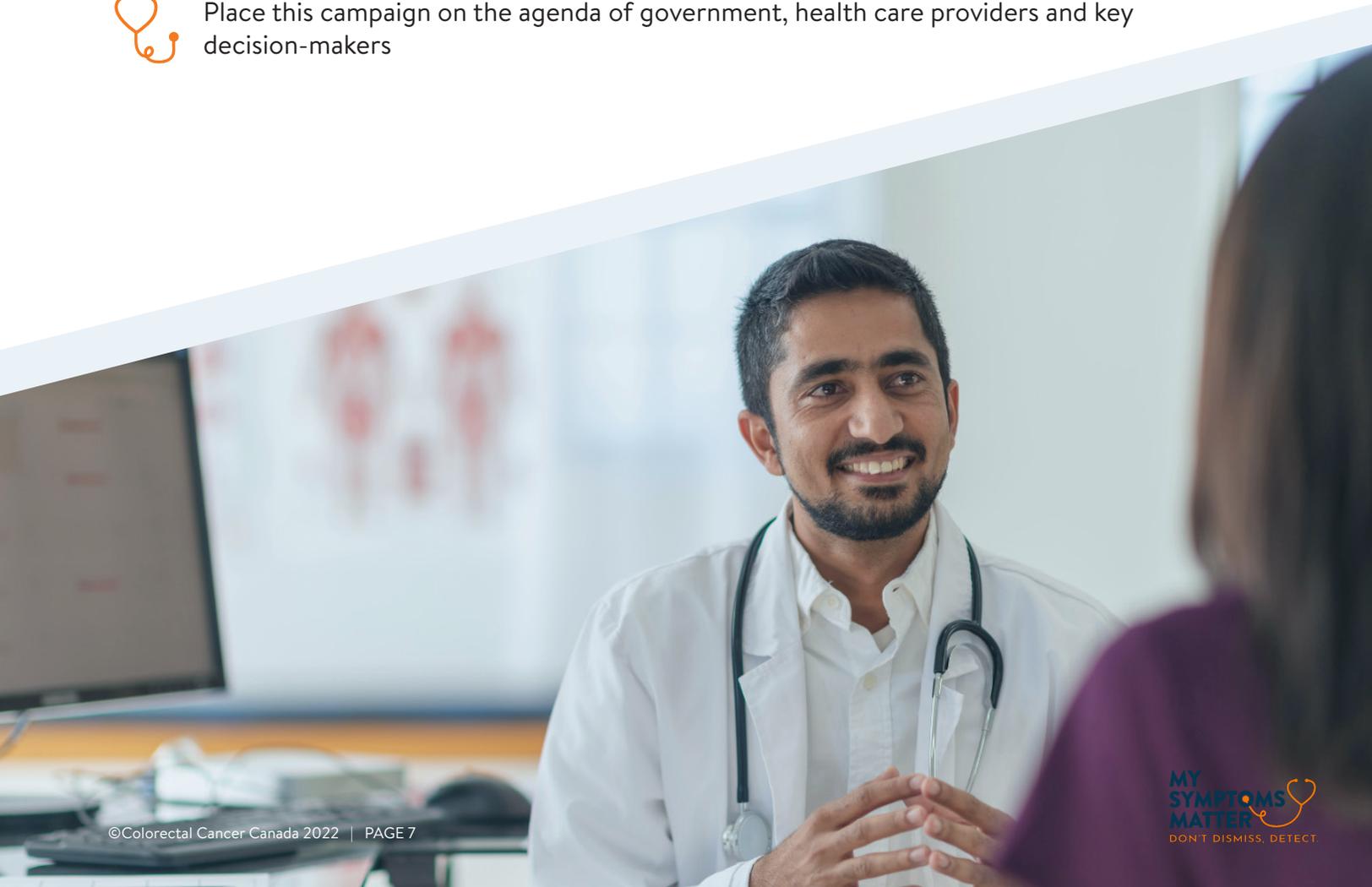


Public empowered to better self-identify and self-advocate for their symptoms at primary contact



## GOALS:

-  Raise awareness of the critical role the public, patients, caregivers, family practitioners and primary healthcare providers can play in early detection of colorectal cancer.
-  Provide educational information to the public, including cancer patients and their caregivers, to self-identify symptoms of colorectal cancer and follow up stringently with their family practitioners
-  Increase family practitioners' identification of colorectal cancer, in particular recognizing the signs and symptoms through educational materials and media
-  Understand colorectal cancer patients' experiences with their family practitioners pre-diagnoses through national surveys
-  Understand family practitioners' perspectives and first-hand experiences with diagnoses and referrals of colorectal cancer cases through national surveys
-  Assess needs, gaps and modalities in primary care through understanding patient experiences
-  Place this campaign on the agenda of government, health care providers and key decision-makers



# KEY ACTIVITIES:



- Literature review to evaluate impact of delayed colorectal cancer diagnoses and summarize best practices and clinical guidelines



- Establishment of Establish Advisory Panel



- Toolkit that aims to sensitize family practitioners and primary healthcare providers on the prevalence of colorectal cancer in early age onset adults as well as the detection of colorectal cancer signs and symptoms



- Toolkit that aims to educate the public/patients to self-identify symptoms of colorectal cancer in a timely manner and discuss them with their family practitioners to ensure correct examination and screening and possibly referral to a specialist



- Development of infographics and posters for distribution to clinics, primary care practitioners



- Development of videos and other educational materials for both family practitioners and the public



- Development of “Message to my future doctor” videos highlighting patient experiences with delayed cancer diagnoses



- Development of section on CCC website



- Promote research to address gaps and unmet needs through collaboration with family practitioners



- Launch of survey to CRC cancer patients regarding their experiences with primary contact with family practitioner and eventual diagnosis



- Launch of survey for family practitioners regarding their first-hand experiences with detecting CRC cases and associated referrals



- Development of webinar with family practitioners and medical oncologists on importance of referral following signs and symptoms



- Assess needs and gaps in primary care by gathering patient experiences



- Launch of social media campaign



- Fortify partnerships for best practices and improvements by connecting with other national and international organizations actively working on this program



- Continuous advocacy efforts

# TIMELINE:

**February 2022 -  
May 2022**

## Key activities in timeline

- Develop communications plan
- Initial literature review
- Establish advisory panel

**June 2022 -  
September 2022**

- Collaboration with SJR communications in creation of videos and materials for March Awareness Month
- Communicate 'My Symptoms Matter Program' messages on CCC website and social media and Postmedia platform
- Development of toolkits for family practitioners and primary healthcare providers
- Development of "Message to my future doctor" videos

**October 2022 -  
January 2023**

- Provide information to patients on self-identification of symptoms of early age onset colorectal cancer by developing toolkits, infographics, videos and other educational material
- Launch survey for patients
- Assess needs and gaps in primary care by gathering patient experiences

**February 2023 -  
August 2023**

- Launch survey for family practitioners
- Lay report and summary on provinces' actions
- Development of webinar with family practitioners and medical oncologists discussing prevalence of early age onset colorectal cancer and earlier detection strategies

**September 2023 -  
December 2023**

- Fortify partnerships for best practices and improvements by connecting with other national and international organizations actively working on similar projects
- Advocacy efforts to continuously create a more resilient healthcare system in Canada
- Place this campaign on the agenda of government, health care providers and key decision-makers

*\*this campaign is projected to 2024 and will be updated when new activities are planned*



## GLOSSARY

**Early age onset colorectal cancer:** Colorectal cancer diagnosed at age younger than 50 years.

**Genetic predisposition:** Increased possibility of developing a particular disease based on a person's genetic inheritance.

**Adenomas:** A benign - noncancerous tumor

**Prognosis:** Predicted outcome of a disease or recovery from a disease.

**Symptomatology:** Study of disease and its related symptoms.

# MY SYMPTOMS MATTER



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Colorectal Cancer Canada (CCC) is the national Canadian not-for-profit corporation dedicated to colorectal cancer (CRC) awareness and education, support for patients and their caregivers, and advocacy on their behalf. CCC is comprised of dedicated volunteers, members, management and is governed by a national Board of Directors. A Medical Advisory Board, made up of top healthcare professionals in the field of colorectal cancer, provides counsel to CCC to ensure members are kept abreast of the latest medical advances in the diagnosis and treatment of the disease.

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