Doris Howell R.N., Ph.D., FAAN.

Doris Howell is a health services and supportive care researcher and was inducted into the Fellowship of the American Academy of Nursing in 2019. She completed a PhD at the Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation (IHPME) in the Outcomes and Evaluation Stream, University of Toronto. She is an Emeritus Senior Scientist in the Division of Supportive Care, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre Research Institute and Adjunct Professor (status), Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing with a cross-appointment in IHPME & Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto. She is also an Affiliate Scientist with the ELLICSR Health, Wellness & Cancer Survivorship Centre, University Health Network, ON.

She held appointments as the RBC Chair, Oncology Nursing Research for 15 years until 2019, as Associate Scientist at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, University of Toronto and as Co-Director of the Ontario Patient Reported Outcomes (PROs) Symptom and Toxicity (ON-PROST) Applied Research Unit. She was also a member of the executive team for implementation of the Cancer Care Ontario symptom and distress screening program and as an executive member of the Person-Centered Perspective of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. As Co-Director of ON-PROST, she and Dr. Liu developed a unique bench to bedside model for selection and testing of multiple PROs across cancer populations including CTCAE and PROMIS measures; and led an implementation study of PROs in ‘real-world’ multi-site oncology practices in Ontario and Quebec. Dr. Howell continues to lead PROs research and is examining the psychosocial impact of cancer and treatment and the role of coping self-efficacy across the illness trajectory in young women with breast cancer (YWBC) as a member of the pan-Canadian RUBY longitudinal cohort study, a longitudinal study in >1200 women over 3 years.

Dr. Howell has led practice transformation in Canada and internationally through the development of pan-Canadian guidelines/algorithms linking PRO scores to evidence-based recommendations for patient management under the auspices of the Canadian Psychosocial Oncology Society and Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. These guidelines have been adapted for use by Cancer Care Ontario and in distress screening programs across Canada and in USA comprehensive cancer programs by the American Society of Clinical Oncology and the International Psychosocial Oncology Society. The fatigue guideline is now being adapted for implementation in the Australia cancer system.

Dr. Howell has had an impressive grant track and publication record of >45 million dollars in tri-council grant funding as a Principal or Co-Investigator and over 250 peer reviewed publications and 12 book chapters and has won multiple awards for her many roles as a leader and researcher in psychosocial oncology and supportive care. She has contributed to the identification of symptom clusters and longitudinal symptom trajectories in large population-based studies and understanding the role of self-efficacy on symptom burden. She has also tested the effects of behavioral self-management interventions on complex cancer symptoms (breathlessness) in randomized clinical trials; and remote monitoring of PROs and ‘real-time’ management of adverse treatment toxicities using mobile phones on patient activation, symptom burden, and quality of life. As the invited quality of life representative for the symptom control committee of the Clinical Trials Group of Canada (CTCG) she has led the development of the Symptom-IQ app for remote monitoring of immunotherapy adverse events that will now be pilot tested in a sub-study of a multi-site bladder cancer immunotherapy trial. She is also completing trials testing proactive healthcare delivery innovations (SMARTCare). The SMARTCare intervention is testing a web-based self-management support (icanmanage.ca: a cancer self-management program) developed by Howell in co-design with patients and cancer coaching. The icanmanage.ca: a cancer self-management program will be further adapted for tailoring to types of cancer and for young women with breast cancer in the Ruby Cohort and in older cancer populations; and will be developed for licensing and commercialization for PRO programs.

Dr. Howell has now developed the first e-learning based Cancer Self-Management Health Coach Certificate program under the auspices of the Health Coach Institute at York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. This 55-hour certificate (21 hrs online learning and 40 hours online program using practice sessions with standardized patients) is developed for national and international healthcare professionals and preparation for licensing as cancer coaches to help clients effectively self-manage the acute and long-term effects of cancer as a chronic disease and reducing late effect risks. Dr. Howell led the recent call to action for self-management in cancer care published in the Journal of National Cancer Institute as a member of the MASCC Global Partners for Self-Management in Cancer Care. As evidenced in her continued commitment and leadership in psychosocial oncology most recently she continues to seek opportunities that can transform care to address the “Whole Person” in cancer care. Above her desk, we read two plaques ‘Unapologetically Brilliant’ and ‘Well-Behaved Women, Rarely Make History’.