An Interview with...Steven Brown

*In this issue we profile **Steven Brown, RTT**, the recipient of CAMRT's 2017 Early Professional Achievement Award. We spoke to him about his new position as Chair of the Provincial group for a BC Cancer Agency-initiated study called POSI (Prospective Outcomes and Support Initiative) for the last 2 years, as well as his involvement in research.*

Tell us about your new position at BC Cancer!

Drawing from my experience as a radiation therapist and Senior Provincial POSI Team Lead, I am currently in a temporary role as the Clinical Informatics Adoption Lead for Centre for the North. This position allows me to lead and support the development and implementation of Cerner at BC Cancer. I see it as an amazing opportunity to challenge myself professionally and grow into a stronger leader in the radiation therapy community.

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Can you describe POSI?

POSI is a valuable tool in used to track and record patient reported outcomes across the province. Since I've come on board in 2015, it's grown from being considered as a pilot project to becoming a province-wide standard of care. Radiation therapy patients from a variety of different treatment sites complete validated questionnaire assessments before, during, and after treatment. These assessments are used by the multi-disciplinary team to help drive patient care in the clinics, and have become a useful tool in population based research initiatives.

How did you get involved in this project, and what have you learned?

I first got involved in POSI very early in my radiation therapy career as a department "champion" for radiation therapy at Centre for the North in Prince George. Opportunities have arisen since then that have allowed me to move into a Team Lead position for my centre, and eventually as the chair for the provincial Team Lead group. Creating and working with the multi-disciplinary group to help find new ways of gathering patient side-effect information has been an awesome opportunity of growth for me. I've learned a lot about questionnaire development and implementation, preparing and giving educational presentations to colleagues, and participating in grassroots initiatives driving patient care across the province.

You have worked on research teams for other projects, can you tell us about these?

As a way for me to refresh my skills from school, and get my "foot in the door" of the radiation therapy research community, I helped conduct a basic comparative analysis of two measurement techniques used to measure head and neck immobilization shells. It was a great opportunity for me to learn a little more about how to organize and compile a research project in the clinical setting, while also helping to validate certain procedures that take place in RT departments across the country. Working on that research project in particular gave me the opportunity to work towards a goal outside of my daily activities. It was an awesome experience to be able to present that research to a number of different conferences and to feel a part of such a vibrant community in the radiation therapy research world.

How did you first get involved on a research project, and where has this brought you in your career?

Getting involved with research, in my opinion, starts with three things: A question, passion, and skillset. Being inquisitive of why we do things the way we do, and how we feel things could be done better, is the first step on getting involved with a research project. Being passionate about what you're researching also helps. If you feel strongly about a topic, it makes it so much easier to follow through with the process. It can sometimes feel overwhelming to get started on what seems like such a daunting task, but if you truly believe that what you're doing has the potential to make a difference, that's what I think it's all about. Skillset is also important. Having the right tools makes a big difference to overcoming obstacles. As an early professional, it can be difficult to overcome the barrier of actually knowing what to do. That's why I think it's crucial to be able to work with others to achieve a common goal as well. Learning how to utilize the strengths of a team is vital in moving forward and getting the most of a research experience. I don't believe that I'd be where I am without the overwhelming support from friends and mentors.

On a personal level?

On a personal level, I think getting into that inquisitive mindset has made me think critically about why I'm doing things. I don't really believe in doing something because "that's how we've always done it", and I think challenging the thought behind anything we do is how we continue to grow as people, and professionals.