

Federation of Medical Women eyes national Pap smear day

by Joe McAllister

CALGARY | The Federation of Medical Women of Canada is preparing plans for a national drop-in Pap smear day—but when exactly the event will take place and if it will be expanded to a full week is up in the air.

The idea for the day was brought up at this past summer's annual meeting of the FMWC by Dr. Muriel Solomon, president of the federation's Calgary branch. The idea follows on reports of successful walk-in Pap smear days in Manitoba and a pilot project in British Columbia.

The Manitoba experiment was supported not only by the FMWC, but also by the provincial government, which printed brochures, including some in

Dogrib (a First Nations language) and Punjabi to attract native and ethnic women, since both groups are less likely to have Pap smears than other Canadian women.

Dr. Kathleen Gartke, an Ottawa orthopedic surgeon and newly elected head of the FMWC, said although it was suggested at the FMWC's annual meeting that the Pap screening day be held in October, there are myriad cancer screening programs across the country and organizing a successful campaign might take longer than anticipated. "We are not planning to compete with other initiatives," she said.

For that reason, the cancer screening day might be held

off until the new year, which would give the organization a chance to involve other professional organizations, canvass physicians who might want to participate, prepare posters and promotional material and involve the national media.

The one-day event may also be extended.

"We're leaning toward a week," Dr. Gartke said, which would give those interested, both doctors and patients, more of a chance to participate.

Every year there are 1,300 new cases of cervical cancer in Canada, 95% of which could be prevented through screening, but between 15% and 35% of women who should be screened aren't screened.



Dr. Gartke