

Nova Scotia Centre on Aging

Spring 2024 Newsletter

Understanding Aging Requires Multiple Perspectives and Approaches

We are nearing the mid point of the decade that the United Nations declared as the Decade of Healthy Ageing. The impetus behind this initiative is the recognition that in most societies around the globe people are living longer. This is one of humanity's greatest achievements – a success story! At the same time, longer lives are not necessarily being lived as healthy lives. There continues to be older adults living in poverty, challenges with access to appropriate health care, limited long term care options, concerns about quality of care and perhaps the biggest impediment to healthy later life is the prevalence of ageism that shapes and informs policies and practices that impact the day to day experience of older adults. How older adults are viewed and treated in many societies can result in the systematic exclusion of older adults and older adults themselves limiting their lives, activities and aspirations. However, just like advancements in longevity itself, we can change the story and have more people grow older healthy.

The aging process is complex and as a result requires a multidisciplinary approach to the study of aging. There are various molecular and cellular changes that occur in our bodies over time that increases our risk of disease. How we mitigate onset and how we treat diseases, a focus on biology and medicine, is one area of research on aging. However, there are other areas of equal importance which help us

understand the study of old age including psychology, sociology, economics and anthropology. It is only through multidisciplinary, and intersectoral, research that the fullest understanding of aging and later life can be achieved. This means that different perspectives and backgrounds come together around a research question to reach conclusions and solutions for complex problems.

The work of multidisciplinary and intersectoral research can be hard. It is often more easy to stay within one's own academic discipline than to work with and through others views and orientations. I experience first hand such challenges with many of the research teams that I am involved with yet the research outcomes are so rich because of the collaboration. However, a multidisciplinary approach to understanding aging is essential as address the complexity of aging. I am pleased that our Centre is once again presenting its flagship conference "Our Future is Aging", June 3-4, 2025 at Mount Saint Vincent University. The 2025 conference will have a focus on multidisciplinary research to enhance people, policy and practice. There will be plenary sessions, papers and posters that share the advantages and the challenges of multidisciplinary research as well as opportunities to connect and explore potential collaborations among academics, policy and decision makers and practitioners. It is a conference you won't want to miss.

Janice



NSCA Director,
Dr. Janice Keefe

Our News

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Our Mission

Through research, education and community engagement, the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging advances knowledge on aging to inform social policy and practice and enhance the quality of life of older people and their families.

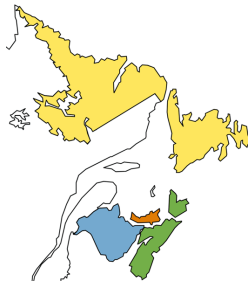


What's Happening...

Survey of staff in long-term care in Atlantic Canada reaching its goal



Staff in more than 50 care homes across Atlantic Canada have been participating in a survey to gather valuable information about their work context and their health and well-being. Project lead, Dr. Janice Keefe, is leading the team of researchers and sector representatives interested in understanding and supporting quality of work life in long-term care.



Project staff attached to each province have been working closely with their respective homes to make participation in the survey as easy as possible for their staff. The team of more than 30 data collectors have administered the survey with over 1300 care aides virtually and close to 1000 other staff such as nurses, managers and allied health providers have submitted their responses to the survey online. The survey was also translated into French. The survey in Atlantic Canada is being done in tandem with the TREC research group at the University of Alberta who have been working with 62 care homes in Alberta to administer the survey. Next steps for the team include preparing the survey data for various dissemination activities over the next year and working to gain access to interRAI data that will enable an understanding of the association between work context and resident outcomes. Keep up to date at www.arcltc.ca



Refresh of dementia education underway

We continue work to refresh the education program *Dementia: Understanding the Journey*. Project staff are working on revising and updating the content with current research and knowledge from the field of dementia care. The revised curriculum will also incorporate input and feedback collected through consultations with course facilitators, learners, sector representatives and subject matter experts. For more information on the DUTJ course visit www.dementiaedu.ca

Nova Scotia Care Homes to Benefit from Wave 2 of Survey

Seven care homes in Nova Scotia participated in the TREC *Long Term Care Quality of Work Life Survey* for a 2nd time. The first time was in 2021 in the midst of the pandemic and then again in the winter/spring of 2024. This work is connected to the larger project that is underway across Atlantic Canada but different in that these seven homes will be able to understand staff experience over time.

Participating homes will receive a feedback report specific to their home later this year that will provide a current snapshot of survey responses by different staff groups and some insight into any changes from 2021 – positive or negative - in the quality of work life of their staff.

New Research Releases from Home Care Pathways Team

Papers:

Funk, L. et al [Problematising dominant assumptions about unpaid support through exploring case study profiles of older home care clients](#) in *Health & Social Care in the Community*

Summary:



[Exploring the Benefits of Person-Centered Home Care and the Policies that Limit its Practice](#)

Presentations:

Janice Keefe - results on clients services when returning to community from hospitalization at the Canadian Association of Health Services and Policy Research conference in May.

Susan Stevens - presentation on clients' trajectories and insights for care management practice at Northwood Research Symposium in June.

Stay up to date: www.homecarepathways.ca

Have you Heard...

SHANNEX DONATES \$500,000 FOR HEALTHY AGING RESEARCH & INNOVATION



Thank you to Shannex for their generous donation of \$500,000 which will support the establishment of a new Shannex Centre for Workforce Wellbeing, including a new research chair, learning opportunities for students and emerging scholars, and research on innovative care practices and nutrition for residents.

SAVE THE DATE: Our Future is Aging Conference—June 2025



We are pleased to be presenting our 3rd *Our Future is Aging* conference in June 2025 on the campus of Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax. The theme for the conference is: *Multidisciplinary Research Informing People, Policy & Practice*

The conference will offer researchers, trainees, decision makers, practitioners, and community members an opportunity to showcase research on aging from a diversity of perspectives, disciplines and approaches which address issues and opportunities of an aging population.

Program will include high-calibre key note speakers, concurrent oral and poster sessions and interactive workshops.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS coming August 2024!

Check for updates at www.ourfutureisaging.ca

Congratulations to NSCA Research Associate Kelly O'Neil



NSCA Research Associate Kelly O'Neil recently received her doctoral degree in Educational Studies from St. F.X. University, where she was also awarded the Governor General Medal for the highest overall average in a thesis-based graduate program. Congratulations Dr. O'Neil!

Out and About

Dr. Keefe presenting at national and local events



Panelist at the 2024 RIA Walk with Me Conference: *Changing the culture of aging in Canada.*



Presenting research results from Home Care Pathways project at the *Canadian Association of Health Services and Policy Research* conference.



Invited speaker at NS Retired Teachers Symposium.

Opportunities to Support NSCA

Dr. F.R. MacKinnon Endowment Fund

Support the efforts of the NSCA, contributions can be made to the Dr. F.R. MacKinnon Fund 902-457-6470.

Presentations & Publications

Publications

Funk, L., Kuryk, K., Spring, L., & Keefe, J. (2024). Problematizing dominant assumptions about unpaid support through exploring case study profiles of older home care clients. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 2024, Article ID 3707796.

Hande, M. J., Owusu, P., Aubrecht, K., Cloutier, D., Estabrooks, C., & Keefe, J. (2024). Towards equitable representation in long-term residential care: Widening the circle to ensure "essential voices" in research teams. *Research involvement and engagement*, 10(1), 34.

Hoben, M., Dymchuk, E., Doupe, M.B., Keefe, J., Aubrecht, K., Kelly, C., Stajduhar, K., Estabrooks, C.A. (2024). Counting what counts: Assessing quality of life and its social determinants among nursing home resident with dementia. *BMC Geriatrics*, 24, Article 177.

DeGraves, B.S., Titley, H., Duan, Y., Thorne, T.E., Banerjee, S., Ginsburg, L., Salma, J., Hegadoren, K., Angel, C., Keefe, J., Lanius, R., & Estabrooks, C.A. (2024). Workforce resilience supporting staff in managing stress: A coherent breathing intervention for the long-term care workforce. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 72(3), 753-766.

Estabrooks, C.A., Armstrong, P., Bourbonnais, A., Donner, G., Flood, C.M., Keefe, J., Pringle, D., Silvius, J., Straus, S., & Wolfson, M. (2024). *Repair and recovery in long-term care: Restoring trust in the aftermath of COVID-19 (2020-2023)*. Royal Society of Canada

Presentations

DeGraves, B., Titley, H., Duan, Y., Hauff, M., Randhawa, R., Daigle, A., Ginsburg, L., Salma, J., Angel, C., Hegadoren, K., Keefe, J., Banerjee, S., Lanius, R., & Estabrooks, C.A. (2024, May 14-16). *Supporting long-term care staff in managing stress: A coherent breathing intervention and process evaluation*. Canadian Association for Health Services and Policy Research Conference. Ottawa, ON.

Mitchell, I., Keefe, J., Poss, J., & Mah, J. (2024, May 14-16). *Hospitalization among long-stay home care clients: Comparing services when they return home*. Canadian Association for Health Services and Policy Research Conference. Ottawa, ON.

Keefe, J. (2024, April 17). *Missing from the headlines: Is ageism the source of limited media coverage and federal government inaction to improve long term care*. Retired Teachers of Nova Scotia, Halifax, NS.

Song, Y., Keefe, J., Duan, Y., Degraeves, B.S., Duynisveld, A., & Estabrooks, C.A. (2023, November 8-12). Quality of work life for care aides in Canadian long-term care homes before and during the pandemic. Gerontological Society of America 2023 Annual Scientific Meeting, Tampa, FL.

Keefe, J., Mitchell, L., Poss, J., & Mah, J. (2023, November 8-12). Do public home care clients 'lose out on services' because they have a family caregiver? Gerontological Society of America 2023 Annual Scientific Meeting, Tampa, FL.

News from the Global Aging and Community Initiative



The Global Aging and Community Initiative (GACI) is directed by Dr. Zachary Zimmer, Tier 1 Canada Research Chair, and is located within the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging.

Recent papers by Dr. Zimmer and colleagues:

- Cognitive function following early life war-time stress exposure in a cohort of Vietnamese older adults. *Social Science and Medicine*. March 2024.
- Untold story of wartime children: Results of the Vietnam Health and Aging Study. *Population Research and Policy Review*. March 2024.
- Educational disparities in moderate or severe joint pain within and across U.S. states: Do macro sociopolitical contexts matter? *Pain*. 2023
- The association between cognitive ability and opioid prescribing in vulnerable older adults with chronic pain in ambulatory care: A secondary data analysis using Medicare Expenditure Panel Survey. *BMC Medicine*. 2023
- Self-reported pain treatment practices among US and Canadian adults: Findings from a population survey. *Innovations in Aging*. 2023
- Pain and disability transitions among older Americans: The role of education. *The Journal of Pain*. 2023
- Vietnam Health and Aging Study Wave 1 Report: Early-Life War Exposure and Late-Life Health. University of Utah. 2023

Papers presented at professional meetings:

- Early-life war exposure and later-life frailty among older adults in Vietnam: Does war hasten aging? Annual meeting of the Gerontological Association of America. Tampa Bay, FL, November 9, 2023.
- Understanding the connection between early-life trauma and later-life health: Insights from the Vietnam Health and Aging Study's Qualitative Interviews. Annual Conference of the Population Health and Armed Conflict Network. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, October 27, 2023

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