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Centre on Aging and Health (CAH)

Newsletter

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University of Regina Faculty Member Examines Research on Aboriginal Caregivers of Elders

Story by Dr. Douglas Durst

On behalf of Human Resources Development Canada, Dr. Douglas Durst and Nuelle Novik from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Regina have completed a literature review of the current research on Aboriginal caregivers of Elders. The review examines the limited range of literature specific to the distinct challenges experienced by Aboriginal caregivers, with a particular focus on the experiences of Aboriginal people providing unpaid care to family members or friends. Over 3000 sources were examined but most were eliminated because they not directly relevant. While recent years have seen an increase in interest in the impact of unpaid caregiving in general terms, there remains little focus on the distinct experiences of Aboriginal

caregivers, most of whom are women.

There has long been the expression of need in terms of support for additional continuing care services for members of this population. It is expected that the numbers of Aboriginal individuals requiring some type of continuing care service will significantly increase over the next several decades.

There are a number of important and relevant issues that set a context for understanding the concerns about caregiving. First, most Aboriginal people have maintained cultural connections in subtle but profound ways. Although it is risky to generalize, even Aboriginal people living in urban settings hold many of these traditional values and attitudes. It is beyond this review to explore

these issues in any depth but it is important to recognize some of these values and how they shape or influence caregiving issues.

The studies found that neither government or non-government agencies were very successful in serving the Aboriginal population. The structure and delivery of their programs were not inviting or appealing for Aboriginal families. There were few or no Aboriginal service providers and the "culture" of the agency was unwelcoming. Hence the caregivers and individuals with disabilities did not access services and programs that were potentially beneficial to them. Aboriginal persons tend to utilize Aboriginal specific agencies such as the Native Friendship Centres or parallel services such as Aboriginal

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The CAH Newsletter

The CAH newsletter is currently accepting submissions for the next issue. Your comments, suggestions, announcements, and CAH-related news items are most welcome.

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CAH Membership

Those interested in joining the CAH may complete the application form available online at the CAH website or request an application form from Dr. Gordon Asmundson, Membership Committee Chair.

Please mail applications to:
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Hadjistavropoulos Appointed RBC Senior Faculty Research Fellow

(adapted from a University of Regina Press Release)

Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos will become the RBC Senior Research Fellow at the University of Regina. In celebration of their centennial, the Royal Bank Foundation created the RBC Research Fellowship Program on Aging and Health to attract and retain exceptional researchers to the University of Regina who will focus their research efforts on gerontological research. The RBC Senior Faculty Fellow is expected to make contributions not only to research but also to training as well as to the administration of the Centre on Aging and Health.

The advisory for the RBC Senior Research Fellow selection committee consisted of Vice President Allan Cahoon (chair), Dean Katherine Bergman, Dr. Nicholas Ruddick and Dr. Mary Hampton. This newly created award will ensure continuing

research leadership in gerontology and aging at the University of Regina. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos received his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology in 1991 and is Professor of Psychology at the University of Regina. Thomas was instrumental in the establishment of both the Centre on Aging and Health, University of Regina and the new Master's program in gerontology. His research, funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, focuses on pain assessment and management among seniors with a special emphasis on seniors who have severe limitations in ability to communicate because of dementia. In recent years, he has been honored with a prestigious Canadian Institutes of Health Research Investigator Award, the Year 2000

Canadian Pain Society Early Career Award for Excellence in Pain Research, the University of Regina Research Excellence Award (co-sponsored by the University of Regina Alumni Association), a Saskatchewan Health Care Excellence Award, a Saskatchewan Centennial Medal and other distinctions. He has also been elected Fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association in recognition of his distinguished contributions to the science and profession of psychology. Dr. Hadjistavropoulos is Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie canadienne* and has served as Psychology Section Editor of the *Canadian Journal on Aging/La Revue canadienne du vieillissement*. He has published approximately 70 peer reviewed papers and book chapters as well as two books.♦

Research Participation Opportunity for Family Caregivers of Seniors with Dementia

WHAT ARE WE STUDYING?

We are interested in looking at family caregivers' concerns about the possibility that their loved-one may experience an injurious fall and/or pain.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

People who provide care in their homes (for at least six months) for a senior with dementia can participate. Participation is voluntary. Caregivers DO NOT have to be afraid that their loved one will fall to participate in this

study. We are looking for caregivers with a range of concerns about these issues.

WHAT WILL CAREGIVERS BE REQUIRED TO DO?

Caregivers will be asked to mark on a calendar any falls that their loved one sustains over a six month period. Two 30 minute telephone interviews (over a six month period) will be conducted and completion of some questionnaires will be required. Caregivers will be given \$30.00 as a

token of appreciation for their participation.

HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

The study is being conducted by Jaime Williams, M.A. (Doctoral Candidate in Clinical Psychology) at the Centre on Aging and Health, University of Regina. *Our researchers would be happy to discuss this important opportunity further (telephone: 306-337-2537; Email: Jaime.Williams@uregina.ca).*♦

Recipients of the SGI Graduate Fellowship in Aging and Health

Thanks to a generous donation to the Centre on Aging and Health, University of Regina from Saskatchewan Government insurance (SGI), the CAH has been able to establish a Graduate Fellowship Program in Aging and Health. Any graduate student at the University of Regina conducting research in gerontology (as it pertains to health) may be eligible to apply (some

restrictions apply). For information on the scholarship, please check the CAH or the University of Regina Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research websites. The first recipients of this award were Michelle Bourgault-Fagnou, Amanda Lints, and Theresa Dever. The scholarship is adjudicated by a committee of faculty members who are affiliated with the CAH. Specifically, Chair of the

Committee is Dr. Doug Durst, Faculty of Social Work while Dr. John Barden, Coordinator for Gerontology/Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies and Dr. William Smythe, Faculty of Arts are the members. Congratulations to all of the award recipients. We anticipate that there will be another competition for this Graduate Fellowship next spring.♦

Research Participation Opportunity for Individuals Awaiting Hip Replacement Surgery

WHAT ARE WE STUDYING?

We are interested in testing some approaches to reduce the anxiety and negative emotions that come with waiting for hip replacement surgery, while improving overall health and quality of life.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

People who are currently waiting for hip replacement surgery can participate.

WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS BE REQUIRED TO DO?

Participants will be asked to take part in two meetings with a researcher in their home. They will be asked questions about their anxiety, mood, physical functioning, and feelings about waiting for surgery. Each meeting should take approximately 45 minutes with six weeks in between meetings. In addition, participants will be asked to read over and refer to

informational and coping materials provided to them.

HOW DO I LEARN MORE?

The study is being conducted by Jennifer Janzen (Graduate Student in Clinical Psychology), Department of Psychology, University of Regina. *The researchers would be happy to discuss this important opportunity further (telephone: 306-585-5369; Email: janzen2j@uregina.ca).*♦

University of Regina Faculty Member Examines Research on Aboriginal Caregivers of Elders *(continued from page 1)*

Wellness Centres. This pattern was also found with elderly Aboriginal persons who did not use existing seniors' programs such as those available in Senior's Centres but frequented the Friendship Centre.

The studies also found that there was a serious void in information. Many individuals were unaware of programs and services for which they were entitled to receive. Information was not provided to them or they did not understand what could be available. Even the Band offices were guilty of withholding information in order to not spend limited resources on Band members who were not living in the community. It can be expected that this would be a serious issues for caregivers of elderly family members living in urban centres.

As evidenced by the completion of this literature review, there are tremendous gaps in the research specific to women Aboriginal caregivers. There is even less literature available in regards to women Aboriginal caregivers in

urban and non-reserve settings. As such, it is recommended that future research primarily focus upon these two issues. Within these issues are five research areas, including traditional caregiving, perspectives on dependence and inclusion, jurisdictional barriers and policy solutions, current patterns and emerging trends, and practical strategies of support for Aboriginal caregivers.

There is a need for some theoretical discussion about culture and how it shapes caregiving in Aboriginal communities including the urban community. This discussion needs to explore issues of dependence, social inclusion and participation and what it means from an Aboriginal perspective. It also needs to acknowledge that not all Aboriginal persons will hold this perspective. There is a need for exploratory research into the jurisdictional quagmire and the determination of practical policy solutions. A successful approach was demonstrated through the research conducted with Aboriginal people with disabilities. Through

focus groups and individual interviews with persons with disabilities and health and social service providers, the researchers were able to get "at the heart" of the issues from perspectives not normally accessed. In addition, the research used a "case study" research methodology to uncover and reveal the daily frustrations and offer concrete solutions. There is a need for research that offers a predictive perspective and can identify future trends in this growing and neglected population. There is the need for research on how agencies and government can provide practical supports and develop realistic expectations. All of these research topics require the participation and involvement of Aboriginal caregivers.

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