

# Community Needs Driven Research Network

ISSUE

08

June  
2014

CNDRN

## Caregiving

At first, participants referred to the word 'caregiving' in many different care-related situations, including care delivery and staff cultural backgrounds. More specific categories of caregiving emerged in the analysis process and were conceptualized separately. During the sessions, participants were asked to explain in more detail what they understood as caregiving issues. The result of this discussion and analysis were the following three issues: i) attitudes and attributes of caregivers that impact caregiving; ii) the issue of caregiving for couples in the CC sector; and iii) the impact of clients' habits and additions on caregiving.

### Attitudes and attributes of caregivers:

Attitudes and personal skills are often passed over in training, recruitment, and team development. These skills are important to providing quality of care. Research could help to understand which skills, attitudes, and attributes are most important to ensuring quality care is provided and to formulating strategies that could help staff develop and use them effectively.



- "And also remembering that we are providing care for people that there's still so much of their lives that we don't impact. Just like you said, we take care of the physical things, but we miss a lot of what gives you quality."
- "I think that there's lots of work to be done with all levels of staff regarding boundaries, professional boundaries; you know, to be engaged and attentive and kind to the residents that we look after, but also keeping that—that you're there as a caregiver, that is your purpose."
- "Well, and how do you teach compassion? Those interpersonal skills, how do you develop those among your staff?"

### Couples in the Continuing Care sector:

An emerging issue in caregiving is providing care to couples who require different levels of care in the CC sector. Since there are no current strategies, and few facilities that can accommodate couples with diverse care needs, such couples are usually separated. Staff expressed the impact they see this has on care for the couples.

Research is needed to identify the characteristics and demographics of couples in this situation, and the impact that various accommodation options may have in terms of costs and care for family members.



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This project was funded by:  
Alberta Innovates Health Solutions

- “It is quite problematic when one spouse needs long term care maybe the other spouse needs level four and because they don’t fit exactly. It is hard to keep them together.”
- “... you know for people who have been married for maybe 60 or more years, where one spouse could provide a little bit of support for the other one, they are separated and its quite traumatic for them.”
- “I saw a man in the community who has been separated from his wife who has dementia. He is in a different facility and when he goes to visit and the wife is engaged in a relationship with another male on the dementia unit after he lived for 50, 60 years with this one woman and that’s all we are able to provide?”

**Impact of client’s habits and/or addictions on caregiving:**

Clients’ lifelong habits and addictions also impact care. Many CC clients have tobacco or alcohol addictions. Since consumption of these products are prohibited in most facilities, staff are having additional demands placed on them related to these addictions. Participants felt that the impact these addictions have, specifically tobacco, have not been adequately addressed; thus, staff lack the tools and resources to support and care for clients with addictions issues.

- “But there’s one addiction out there that they totally ignore and just banned totally and it’s cigarettes. And that is a huge issue.”
- “And from a health promotion standpoint, smoke free is great but yet this is also these people’s home and from a quality of life issue that’s a huge deterrent for them. So how do we balance the two?”
- “And these people are 80, 90 years old, they’ve smoked their entire lives, and it’s an addiction. It’s not like they can just quit.”



**What is being done to address this issue?**

Two research teams have been funded in relation to the CNDRN issue of caregiving:

1. A team of researchers from Wing-Kei Care Centre, Bethany Care Society, University of Calgary, and University of Alberta, has been funded to look further into the role of Health Care Aides (HCA) within an interdisciplinary team. The project, ‘A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Electronic vs. Paper-based Documentation’, proposes to compare the effectiveness of electronic versus paper-based documentation by HCAs and how technology affects the communication between HCAs and their interdisciplinary team members. Documentation forms a critical component of decision-making for staff, and therefore has the potential to impact the quality of caregiving offered to residents.
2. A research team from University of Alberta, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, Covenant Health, and Alberta Caregivers Association, has been funded to look further into the experiences of family caregivers of individuals at the end of life. These caregivers experience many transitions during this time, affecting their physical and mental health. This metasynthesis study will explore what influences these experiences and fill a knowledge gap in end of life care, providing a foundation for future research, policy, and caregiving practices to improve health outcomes.