SPA-LTC Project: 

*Strengthening A Palliative Approach in Long-Term Care*

3rd Annual TVN Conference
September 29th, Sheraton Centre Hotel, Toronto, ON
Presenters

Principal Investigators

Sharon Kaasalainen, RN, PhD
Associate Professor, School of Nursing
McMaster University

Tamara Sussman, S.W., PhD
Associate Professor, School of Social Work
McGill University
SPA-LTC Project: TVN-Funded Strategic Impact Grant

2014-2016
# Co-Investigators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Noori Akhtar-Danesh</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Biostatistics</td>
<td>Biostatistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kevin Brazil</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Queens University</td>
<td>Professor, Palliative Care</td>
<td>Clinical Epidemiology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robin Bonifas</td>
<td>RSW, PhD</td>
<td>Arizona State University</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Social Work</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valérie Bourgeois-Guérin</td>
<td>OPQ, PhD</td>
<td>Université du Québec à Montréal</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Psychology</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vanina da Bello-Haas</td>
<td>MSc, PT, PhD</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>Assistant Dean, Physiotherapy</td>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Marie Earl</td>
<td>MSc, PT, PhD</td>
<td>Dalhousie University</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Physiotherapy</td>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Lou Kelley</td>
<td>RSW, PhD</td>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
<td>Professor, Social Work</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynn McCleary</td>
<td>RN, PhD</td>
<td>Brock University</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Nursing</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marg McKee</td>
<td>MA, PhD</td>
<td>Lakehead University</td>
<td>Director, Social Work</td>
<td>Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alexandra Papaioannou</td>
<td>MD, MSc</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>Professor, Medicine</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deborah Parker</td>
<td>RN, PhD</td>
<td>Centre for Applied Nursing Research (CANR) Ingham Institute</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jenny Ploeg</td>
<td>RN, PhD</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>Scientific Director, Centre on Aging</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shane Sinclair</td>
<td>CPCS, PhD</td>
<td>University of Calgary</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patricia Strachan</td>
<td>RN, PhD</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>Associate Professor, Nursing</td>
<td>End-of-Life Cardio, Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genevieve Thompson</td>
<td>RN, PhD</td>
<td>University of Manitoba</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Nursing</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lorraine Venturato</td>
<td>RN, PhD</td>
<td>University of Calgary</td>
<td>Chair in Gerontological Nursing</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abby Wicken-Griffiths</td>
<td>RN, PhD, c</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>TVN Postdoctoral Fellow</td>
<td>Dementia Care</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>John You</td>
<td>MD, MSc</td>
<td>McMaster University</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Medicine</td>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel Young</td>
<td>MTA, PhD</td>
<td>Concordia University</td>
<td>Assistant Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts</td>
<td>Other-Music Therapy</td>
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**2015-10-05**

**SPA-LTC PROJECT - TVN FUNDED 2014-2016**

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Advisory Board

- Paula Neves/Extendicare Canada
- Amie Vahrmeyer/Extendicare Canada
- Rosemarie Lindau/Extendicare Canada
- April Coulter/Extendicare Canada
- Linda Gray/Extendicare Bayview
- Marcy Turkel/Extendicare Bayview
- Sharon Gomez/Craiglee
- Peter Allat/Bridgepoint Active Health, Sinai Health System
- Susan King/HNHB Regional Hospice Palliative Care Program
- Elizabeth Wojtowicz/HNHB Nurse-Led Outreach Team
- Deborah Rimay/Hamilton Continuing Care
- Jeanette O’Leary/Shalom Village
- Adrienne Shorten/Shalom Village
- Sharon Baxter/Canadian Hospice Palliative Care
- Shelly Cory/Canadian Virtual Hospice
- Deidre Downes/Jewish Home Life

- Program Toronto
- Mary Schulz/Alzheimer Society of Canada
- Risa Kim/Alzheimer Society of Canada
- Judith Wahl/Advocacy Centre for the Elderly
- Allison Costello/Aging & LTC Implementation Branch, Ontario MoHLTC
- Donna Fairley/Ontario Association of Residents' Councils
- Lorraine Purdon/Family Councils Program
- Donna Rubin/Ontario Assoc. of Non-profit Homes & Services for Seniors
- Kathryn Pilkington/Ontario Assoc. of Non-profit Homes & Services for Seniors
- Tim Siemens/Pleasant Manor and Tabor Manor
- Louise Hanvey/Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association
Background

- As the population continues to age, more people will die in long term care (LTC) homes

- These people represent one of society’s most frail and marginalized populations who often struggle with managing multiple chronic conditions and social isolation

- Palliative care is complicated for residents who suffer with dementia due to the gradual loss of their cognitive abilities
  - decision-making related to care needs often rests with family members or health care professionals
Palliative Approach in LTC

- Begins when residents are admitted into LTC, most have chronic life-limiting conditions
- Based on symptom management and residents needs, not prognosis
- Interdisciplinary approach to care within a holistic perspective, resident-focused
- Focus on preparation and care planning
- Need for family education and support
5 Year Project (2009-2014)

- Goal of the Community University Research Alliance funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) entitled *Improving the Quality of Life of People Dying in Long Term Care Homes* was to improve quality of life for people who are dying in LTC homes through developing palliative care programs using a process of community capacity development (PI: ML Kelley)

- Developed toolkit for other LTC homes to access:
  - [www.palliativealliance.ca](http://www.palliativealliance.ca)

- SPA-LTC builds on this work by implementing and evaluating some of these tools
SPA-LTC Project: An Overview
SPA-LTC Project Methods

- Participatory Action Research Study
  - Champion Team
  - Advisory Board
  - Program Components Shift with feedback and evaluation

- Mixed methods
  - Focus group data
  - Surveys
  - Chart data

- Multiple Case Study Design
  - 4 LTC sties
Community Palliative Care Consultants

Research Team

Advisory Board: Partners & Decision Makers

Long Term Care Home

SPA-LTC Core Components

Care Conferences
- occurs: 6 weeks post admission
- goals of care discussed with family/resident and IP team

Develop PC Champion Team
- opinion leaders
- meet bimonthly

Hold Comfort Care Rounds
- meet bimonthly
- PC consultant to attend
- education and reflection

Implement PPS
- weekly if <30%
- monthly if > 30%

EOL Family Care Conferences
- occurs if PPS<30%
- family completes questionnaire before FCC
- family meets with IP team

Bereavement Follow-up
- occurs 1 month post-death
- LTC staff calls family to provide support and referral if needed
Preliminary findings from our pre-implementation focus groups
Focus Group Purpose

- Develop an understanding on different stakeholders’ perspectives of what palliative care means
- Engage knowledge users at the front end of the research
- Examine perspectives and reactions to proposed study interventions
Focus Group Participants

A total of 20 focus groups were conducted in all four participating homes with 124 participants:

- 24 residents
- 14 family members
- 33 personal support workers (PSWs)
- 25 nurses
- 21 support staff
- 4 volunteers
- 3 Other
Focus Group Analysis

- Three step process of analysis informed by grounded theory approach
  - Open coding
  - Axial coding
  - Selective coding

- Coding structure developed with resident data and refined with analysis of other stakeholder groups
Findings – Main Themes

- **Overarching sense of passivity amongst residents**
  - Did not see themselves as agents of their own care

- **Conceptualizations of palliative care trajectory limited**
  - Residents focused on post mortem
  - Staff focused on final days of life

- **Public nature of death and dying impacted residents’ and families**
  - Highlighted for residents what they felt to be ‘good’ vs ‘bad’ end of life care
  - Made families worried about feeling abandoned when residents died
  - Fears not expressed to staff
Implications Adaptations to Intervention

- Development of illness trajectory pamphlets
  - Meet informational needs expressed by families
  - Help to activate early identification and discussion

Development Methods
- Material from 5 on-line sites
- Reviewed by specialists in palliative care (PC) (n= 2) and Alzheimer's and dementia (n=1), LTC staff (n= 34) and residents (n=1)
- Assessed for readability
An Illness Trajectory Resource for Dementia Caregivers

A Palliative Approach to Care

A Palliative Approach to Care refers to:
- Symptom management
- Supportive care
- Advanced care planning
- Open communication
- Social and spiritual support

The focus of care shifts from prolonging life to maintaining quality of life. It does not require a palliative care referral. A palliative approach applies to both chronic (e.g., dementia) and reversible (e.g., infectious) conditions.

Most people in long-term care homes benefit from a palliative approach to care because they are living with conditions for which no cure exists. Many people can live a comfortable life in long-term care homes for months or years with such conditions.

For more information regarding the Palliative Approach to Care, please visit http://www.vioitsospacpe.ca/.

Advanced Care Planning

This pamphlet has been created to help people with AD and their families plan ahead by learning about the associated signs and symptoms, and disease progression. Considering resident preferences, values and beliefs for end-of-life care early can help people with AD, caregivers, and the care team discuss and respect resident dignity and promote quality of life.

For more information on Advanced Care Planning, please visit http://www.advancecareplanning.co/.

Resources

1) Alzheimer Society of Canada: education materials about what to expect at each AD stage, caring for people with dementia: http://www.alzheimers.ca/.
3) Alzheimer’s Association (American Organization): living with AD, interactive tour of inside the brain in multiple languages, common myths of AD & what to expect at each stage: http://www.alz.org/.

What is Dementia?

Dementia describes a group of progressive brain disorders. Impairment in memory, symptoms will worsen over time. Dementia affects a person’s cognitive function (e.g., thinking, problem-solving, language). Mood and behavior, and reduces one’s ability to perform normal daily activities.

Alzheimer’s disease (AD) is the most common form and accounts for 60% of cases of dementia. It is the result of the build-up of plaques in the brain and degeneration of brain cells. The average person with AD lives 4 to 8 years after the initial diagnosis. A person with AD can be described as being at the early, middle, late, and end-of-life phases. This pamphlet will discuss the late and end-of-life stages.

Common Experiences for Caregivers

Caregivers need to be mindful of their own health and well-being while caring for persons with AD. Symptoms of depression and anxiety may be exacerbated by caregivers. Long-term stress may weaken your immune system and may make you prone to infections. Stress can also cause wounds to take a longer time to heal.

If you are feeling caregiver stress, remember that you are not alone. Support services are available in the community and online. Information on these resources are available at the end of this pamphlet. You can also call the Alzheimer Society helpline for information and support. This pamphlet can provide you with some helpful tips and resources to help you care for your loved one with Alzheimer’s disease.

Living with AD

The progression of AD cannot be reversed and there is no cure cure. Being well-informed about AD will help caregivers know what to expect and make decisions for end-of-life. Persons with AD have a new type of “normal.” Caregivers should be prepared to meet their needs at all stages.

Late Stage

Persons with AD will experience:

- Severe memory loss (e.g., names, events) affecting daily activities
- Loss of control of time and space
- Difficulty producing speech
- Loss of ability to eat and maintain food
- Loss of ability to care for oneself (e.g., personal care and incontinence), baths, and walk without assistance
- Difficulty swallowing (increased risk of pneumonia and bone)
- Weight loss
- Decreased interest in engaging in activities

Tips for Caregivers:

- Ask health-care provider about medications to manage pain, shortness of breath, and agitation
- Continue to reinforce with patients by playing music, and telling comforting stories
- Always consider resident’s values and preferences at end-of-life, and reflect on previous decisions
- Discuss strategies with staff to maintain resident dignity
- Remember that apathy and weight loss are normal for persons at the end-of-life, although it may be distressing to you

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Provider

- What kind of care can I expect for the late and end-of-life stages?
- How long can someone be in the later stages of this disease?
- What types of care decisions may I be faced with when end-of-life is near?
Preliminary findings from our staff surveys
Staff Survey Purpose

➤ Gather base line data on overall state of staff knowledge and comfort with palliative care

➤ Examine possible differences between registered, staff, support staff and PSWs on knowledge and comfort
  ➤ Tools selected were Not discipline specific

➤ Guide implementation by site specific areas requiring attention
  ➤ Trends in knowledge gaps
Staff Surveys

- Training, Experience and Role
  - education, occupation, hrs per week

- Inter-professional Collaboration for Palliative Care
  - attending rounds, reviewing charts, attending care conferences
  - Intensity of Professional Collaboration Survey (Sicotte et al., 2002)
  - 17 items, 5 point likert scale

- Comfort and Knowledge Related to End-of-Life Care
  - End-of-Life Professional Caregiver Survey (Lazenby et al., 2012)
  - 28 item, 5 point likert scale
Summary of Staff Survey Participants

A total of 296 staff surveys were collected in all four participating homes (42% response rate, overall). The total amount of surveys collected among staff are as follows:

- 119 PSWs (40% of total responses)
  - 44% PT & 56% FT; 66% between the ages of 35-54
- 66 Nurses (22% of total responses)
  - 30% PT & 70% FT; 63% between the ages of 35-54
- 103 support staff (35% of total responses)
- 8 Allied Health Professionals (3% of total responses)
Preliminary Between Groups Analysis

- Descriptive statistics were compiled for items related to nurse and PSW roles and responsibilities within a palliative care context.
- Specific survey items were also evaluated for differences between nurses and PSWs in responses across end-of-life care knowledge and practices ($t$-tests).
- Between groups ANOVAs were also performed to explore differences between nurses, PSWs and support staff on items related to staff and peer support resources.
Findings Descriptive Analysis
PSWs & Nurses

- Nurses more integrated in care planning than PSWs

- 85% of PSWs say they have contributed to the development of care plans compared to 97% of nurses
- 63% of PSWs say they have attended care conferences compared to 83% of nurses
Findings – PSWs & Nurses
End of Life Caregiver Survey

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Nurses</th>
<th>PSW</th>
<th>T-test</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am knowledgeable about cultural factors influencing end-of-life care</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>6.66*</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am comfortable dealing with patients' and families religious and cultural perspectives</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>3.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>I can recognize when patients are appropriate for referral to hospice</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>13.54**</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am familiar with palliative care principles and national guidelines</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.89</td>
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*p<.05
**p<.001
Findings – PSW, Nurses & Support Staff End of Life Care Caregiver Survey

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<th>PSW</th>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have personal resources to help meet my needs when working with dying patients and their families</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>2.88</td>
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<td>I feel that my workplace provides resources to support staff who care for dying patients</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>2.97</td>
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*p<.05  
**p<.001

Post hoc bonferroni tests found no significant differences between nurses and PSWs on these survey items. However, compared to both nurses and PSWs, support staff were significantly less likely to indicate they had access to resources to support their work with this population.
This research is funded by TVN, which is supported by the Government of Canada through the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCD) program.