

# Developing a System Navigator Role in Primary Care: Understanding the Context

**Jacobi Elliott**, PhD Candidate  
University of Waterloo

3<sup>rd</sup> Annual TVN Conference  
Toronto, ON  
September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Co-author: Paul Stolee, PhD  
**3 Minute Oral Presentation**



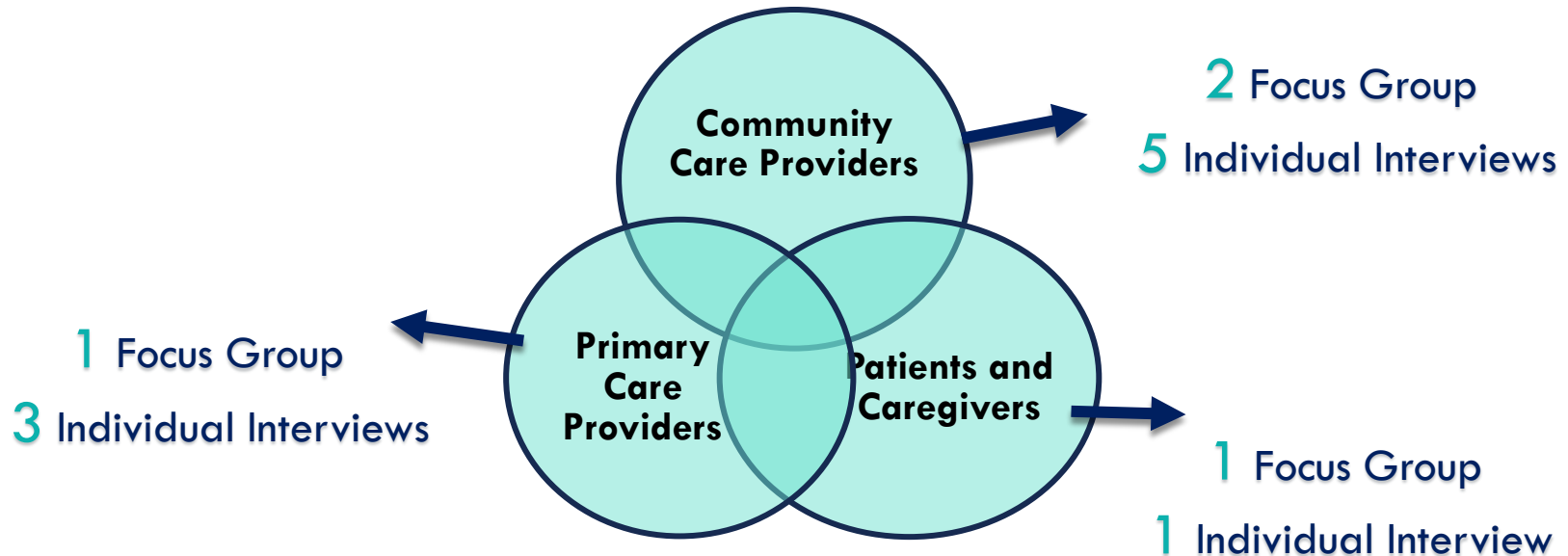
# Background & Purpose

- ❑ The current health care system is ***not well designed to coordinate care for persons with complex health problems*** who require services from multiple care providers across multiple settings.
- ❑ Patient-provider partnerships are critical in supporting ***effective coordination and navigation*** through a complex and fragmented health care system.<sup>1</sup>



**Purpose: a) To understand the current primary and community care context and b) To understand what participants thought about a system navigator role**

# Methods: Qualitative Interviewing



# Coordinating Care for Older Complex Patients: Current State

A Selection of Themes	Information from Focus Groups
<p><b>Fragmented communication between primary care and community care</b></p>	<p><i>“There is a lot of room for improvement here...we try to make connections where we can but it’s certainly not done consistently or with every patient” – Community Care Provider</i></p> <p><i>“The information we receive is very fragmented” – Community Care Provider</i></p>
<p><b>Older adults and caregivers are not always engaged in decision-making</b></p>	<p>Interviewer: Are your patients engaged in making decisions about their care? <i>“That is a good question....probably not as much as they should be” – Primary Care Provider</i></p> <p><i>“Sometimes you build trust and can get people engaged...but sometimes individuals are inundated with information and so they glass over and often lose understanding of what’s available” – Community Care Provider</i></p>
<p><b>Many community organizations offer services for older complex individuals but accessing services can be difficult</b></p>	<p><i>“We have a significant waitlist with no end in sight” – Community Care Provider</i></p> <p><i>“We have a lot of word-of-mouth referrals as people learn about what our organization offers” – Community Care Provider</i></p> <p><i>“I never knew about all of these community services before [this discussion] – Nurse (Primary Care Team)</i></p>



# What did participants have to say about developing a system navigator role?

“ I think there’s a lot to be said for enabling people in our community to be in a position where **they can form choices and they can make decisions and navigate the system themselves**”

- *Community Care Provider*

“It’s a start, it will help **coordinate care**”

- *Older Adult*

“It’s a **very important role** [system navigation]...I think **having one point of contact that people feel comfortable calling in to is essential...**

- *Primary Care Provider*



# Discussion & Next Steps

- ❑ Both patients and providers felt that it was maybe **unnecessary to create a new role**, rather providers and patients should work together within and across the health care system (*improve patient and caregiver engagement in decision-making*).
- ❑ Older adults and caregivers *are not being engaged in decision-making as much as they could or should be*
- ❑ Care received outside of the primary health care sector is not being reported back to primary care providers
- ❑ More interviews need to be conducted with providers, patients and caregivers to further understand and develop what this type of role might look like in primary care
- ❑ **SHARP will be engaged throughout the entire project**

