

## Stakeholder Inclusion in Practice Change, South Zone

University of Lethbridge

*Project Lead: Sienna Caspar, Assistant Professor*

A Stakeholder engagement study, which is a collaborative study among multiple organizations and includes persons living with dementia, their family, care providers, funders, regulators, licensing inspectors and researchers, has been taking place at the St. Michael's Health Centre – Covenant Health, located in Lethbridge, Alberta. The purpose of this study is to improve person-centred care in long-term care facilities by co-developing and implementing feasible and sustainable person-centred mealtime practices. The study also aims to engage residents living with Alzheimer disease and dementia during mealtimes, creating a more social and home-like environment for all.



This project is led by Dr. Sienna Caspar, PhD, CTRS, assistant professor at the University of Lethbridge in the department of Health Sciences - Therapeutic Recreation and her research team. The project includes collaboration with organizations such as: The Alzheimer's Society of Canada, Alzheimer's society of Northwest Territories and Alberta, Covenant Health, and Alberta Health Services.

Staff at St. Michael's Health Care, along with a team of researchers from the University of Lethbridge have adopted CHOICE+ principles and are working together to implement changes to mealtimes for residents living with Alzheimer's or dementia, the goals being to create a more person-centred mealtime environment. The team, which is referred to as the Process Improvement Team (PIT), is made up of four Health Care Aids, two Licensed Practical Nurses, three Dietary staff, one Recreation Therapist, Management from St. Michael's Health Centre, and one family member of a resident in care. The PIT team has had two training sessions with

University of Lethbridge Researchers, Dr. Sienna Caspar, PhD, CTRS, Erin Davis B.A.Sc. (Hon), LPN. These sessions were facilitated by Don MacLeod, MA, B.A./B.S.W and Partner of BlueSkye Thinking Inc., who is a former senior leader in the continuing care sector and brings expertise in facilitation, quality improvement and change leadership. Training sessions involved stakeholder collaboration between management of the faculty, dietary management and staff, recreation therapy staff, Licensed Practical Nurses and Health Care Aids. For some, this was the first time they have had the opportunity to sit and collaborate and discuss their role in care service with managers and individuals from other disciplines.

Care staff are now in their third week of making changes to mealtime routines; the staff who are part of the PIT team are excited and have been working hard to educate their co-workers on how everyone can get involved and help create more social home-like environments for residents during mealtimes. Health care aids and LPN's working on the project have even been meeting on their own time to discuss how they can work as a team in helping this project to be successful.

### **Initial outcomes:**

Staff have commented on how exciting it has been to get to know the residents better, they are learning new things about the people they care for on a more personal level.

One Care Aid stated, **"I had no idea that one of the residents lived on a farm and once I found that out we had so much to talk about"**.

Another care aid said that she found including social conversations at mealtimes makes her job easier, **"we have had trouble getting one of the residents to sit and eat at meal times, now that we are sitting with the residents he comes to meals, sits, and even feeds himself"**.

The staff at St. Michael's have also seen positive outcomes to allowing residents more choice, "the residents love choosing what they are going to drink for dinner and conversations increase as we give them choice".



As expected, there have also been challenges to implementing change. To address this, the PIT team members gather together once a week to discuss the challenges and work together with all staff to try and find solutions. The results of these exemplary efforts are that they are already starting to see important improvements in the delivery of person-centred mealtimes for residents.