

Transforming Primary Healthcare for Frail Elderly Canadians Grant

The Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network™ (SCN) has supported a research grant aimed at transforming care for older Canadians living with frailty. Led by principal investigator Dr. Paul Stolee at the University of Waterloo, this 3-year grant funded by the Canadian Frailty Network is titled, “*Transforming primary healthcare for frail elderly Canadians.*” The team includes researchers from Laval University, University of British Columbia, Dalhousie University, and University of Calgary.

Project Description

It is well known that older Canadians are high users of healthcare services. What is less well known is that the healthcare system is not well-designed to meet the needs of those who use it most. Older persons look to their primary care practitioners to assess their needs and coordinate their care. Unfortunately, the health concerns of older persons are often missed in too-short office visits. They may need care from a variety of providers and services, but this care is often not well-coordinated. Older persons and their caregivers are the experts in their own needs and preferences, but often do not have a chance to participate fully in treatment decisions or care planning. As a result, they may have health problems that are not properly assessed, managed or treated resulting in poorer health, as well as preventable and expensive emergency department visits and hospital stays.

Improving the health of older Canadians means identifying health problems early. It means providing timely supports so that manageable concerns do not spiral out of control. And, above all, it means helping healthcare providers actively engage older patients and their family caregivers as partners in care. Patients want to make informed choices about their health and the care they receive, based on their personal values, preferences and goals, and informed by available evidence.

Nine primary care clinics in three provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Alberta) will use a quick screening tool to identify older patients who are at risk of becoming frail. This will help initiate referral to healthcare or support services where necessary. Innovative technology will be used to streamline the referral process and help assist older adults in decision-making about their care.

With support from the Canadian Frailty Network, researchers, collaborators, healthcare providers and older adults from across Canada will work together to transform primary healthcare for frail elderly Canadians.