This *Impact Case Study* was produced by Dr. Crystal Tremblay in collaboration with the faculty lead(s) identified in the following case study. All twelve *Impact Case Studies* were included in Dr. Crystal Tremblay’s research project, *Community-Engaged Research (CER) at the University of Victoria 2009—2015*, that scanned the impact of UVic’s involvement with community-engaged research over a six-year period.

Dr. Tremblay's research was supported by the Office of Community-University Engagement and the Office of the Vice-President Research. Learn more about this project at uvic.ca/ocue/research.
Volunteer Drivers in the Greater Victoria Area

UN Sustainable Development Goals addressed by this project

3. Health & well-being  
10. Reduced inequalities

UVic's International Plan Goals addressed by this project

- International Development, Health and Education

Enhancing the quality of life for seniors requiring volunteer transportation in the local community.

Faculty Leads: Holly Tuokko & Vincenza Gruppuso, Institute on Aging & Lifelong Health

Partners: Kaye Kennish, James Bay Community Project and Capital City Volunteers; Lisa Gleinzer, James Bay Community Project; Susan Zerb, Saanich Volunteer Services Society

Project timeframe: 2013-2015

Funding: Work study program and international Science without Borders program

Website: http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/aging
About

Efforts are underway throughout British Columbia to create communities in which people of all ages and levels of ability can engage and access services to enhance their quality of life. In the Greater Victoria area, transportation has been identified as an issue, particularly with respect to older adults and persons with disabilities. While many older adults remain safe to drive well into later life, some will need to retire from driving, primarily for reasons of impaired health. People with significant health challenges may require “supportive transportation” that includes assistance outside the vehicle (e.g., escorting the person into their destination, waiting with the person at the destination). One way such support is offered within the Greater Victoria area is through service organizations that provide volunteer drivers. Volunteers from the James Bay Community Project, Saanich Volunteer Services Society, and Capital City Volunteers were interviewed in person or by telephone regarding their experiences as volunteer drivers as well as their perceptions of the positive and negative aspects of this involvement. Significant motivators for becoming volunteer drivers included beneficence (i.e., being able to help someone in need), a desire to engage in a pleasurable experience (i.e., driving) and possibly one that utilized skills (e.g., first aid qualification), and a desire to meet new people. Selected challenges that were raised included the difficult reality of assisting individuals with complex care issues, the physical demands of managing assistive devices (e.g., walkers and wheelchairs), scheduling issues, and time spent waiting for clients.

In terms of attracting new volunteer drivers and improving the experience, respondents recommended highlighting the many ways in which providing this service benefits those in need within the community and benefits the drivers. Being able to meet new people, to engage in something they find enjoyable (e.g., driving), and to make a palpable difference to the lives of others were some of the messages they wished to convey to others. The volunteer drivers felt appreciated by the service agencies and the ride recipients. Suggestions for recruitment and retention of drivers included a mentoring program to connect novice and senior volunteer drivers, and inviting people with driving and health care-related experience to become involved as they may wish to continue to exercise their skills in a new, very rewarding way.

"The potential impact of our research was to enhance the quality of life for seniors requiring volunteer transportation in the local community. By understanding the facilitators and barriers to the provision and use of the service, the community agency would be able to enhance opportunities for community members"

Level of Impact: Individual Community Systems

Extent of community collaboration throughout the project cycle 81%

Description of research partnership

We consulted with community partners about research question of interest to them, consulted on question formation and data collection strategies, recruited participants through partner agencies. Community partners provided feedback on draft analyses and reports to ensure alignment with their needs and goals.
Student role & Impact

Three students were involved with the project as interviewers and transcriptionists. One was from Brazil in the Science without Borders program, one was an undergraduate psychology student and one was a graduate student with an interest in aging.

All three students were able to meet the goals and objectives of their respective programs and develop core, professional and program competencies such as describing various facets involved in the conduct of research on aging (e.g., data collection, analysis, ethical issues), and engaging in knowledge mobilization activities connecting aging research to the local community.

Key successes and challenges

Successes: students were enthusiastic learners. We were able to recruit participants and address the questions posed by the community agency.

Challenges: the sample size was insufficient for publication in academic venues. Without additional resources (i.e., funding and human resources) we were limited in the scope of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Non-refereed publications</td>
<td>1 Student skills, knowledge, attributes towards capacity building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting with government &amp; non government bodies</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students employed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key factors for a successful CER project

Without adequate sample sizes it is difficult for researchers to go beyond providing a report. That is, to publish in academic venues, the sample size and research methods must be sufficiently rigorous. It is often difficult to achieve this level of rigor when working with small community groups.

Key References