When I grow up
I want to live in a nursing home:
Why the care of older adult populations should concern us all

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Aging is personal since, like it or not, we are all growing older. In the Global North, demographic aging trends tell us that with increased longevity there is a greater likelihood that we will experience long-term care (LTC) environments, most likely in the role of supporting family members, but also, potentially, as individuals living in these environments, or using LTC services ourselves, at some point. Research by the Organizations of Economic Cooperation and Development (2005) suggests that about 43% of Canadian seniors will require nursing home care, and will stay there for an average of about 3-4 years once they enter this environment. Conversely, anecdotal evidence for British Columbia suggests that residents spend about 18 months in a facility on average, and are generally on a palliative trajectory for that entire time.

In the past few decades, ‘person-centred care’ (PCC) has been a consistent mantra with respect to the provision of care for frail older persons in LTC settings (Armstrong & Braedley, 2013; Smele & Seeley, 2013). This ‘spirit’ or philosophy of care is aimed at the preservation of personhood, independence, and autonomy. At the same time, the health care environment is mired in a biomedical model, and neoliberal values that emphasize and constrain quality of care, while virtually minimizing or ignoring these person-centred and quality of life issues. As such, the need for compassion, imagination, innovation, and creativity in the care of frail, older persons has never been greater. This talk will draw on findings from recent research projects.