Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of

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“Needs, Preferences and Decision-Making Regarding Long-Term Residential Care: South Asian Older Adults’ and Family Caregivers’ Perspectives”

Social Dimensions of Health

Wednesday, March 31, 2021
1:00pm (PDT)
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
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Abstract

The aging Canadian population is becoming increasingly ethno-culturally diverse primarily due to immigration. This, together with research indicating increased likelihood of long-term residential care (LTRC) use at older ages and challenges in providing these services, prompt important questions about whether LTRC services are prepared to provide culturally responsive and competent care to immigrant and ethno-cultural minority older adults (EMOA). This ethnographic study, informed by a critical theoretical perspective, explored these questions from the perspectives of South Asian older adults (SAOAs) and their family caregivers (FCGs).

In-depth interviews with 18 SAOAs in LTRC, assisted living and those at home, their FCGs, and seven key informants from LTRC and the South Asian (SA) community (n=43) were undertaken. These interviews, in addition to 220 hours of participant observation in two LTRC facilities, provided information regarding the needs, preferences, experiences and situation of SAOAs in LTRC as well as how SA families make decisions regarding the use of such services. A select review of provincial policy, residential care regulation, health authority and facility documents, exposed taken-for-granted assumptions in how care and services are provided and the sociopolitical context of LTRC provision.

Study findings suggest that LTRC services are challenged to meet the needs of immigrant and EMOA and reflect unequal and inequitable care, illuminated by the differential impact of macro-policies and resource-constrained LTRC environment on SAOAs and their families and on the ability of existing LTRC services to provide person-centred care. This has implications for immigrant and EMOA and their family members in light of findings that the decision to move to LTRC is essentially a (non) decision influenced by a range of social structural factors that interact to necessitate the move to LTRC. Study findings revealed the salience of socio-economic status and economic resources in particular, in the (non) decision for LTRC placement.

The findings from this study along with demographic shifts in the aging Canadian population call for LTRC service providers and policy makers to actively prepare for increasing ethno-culturally diverse resident populations and point to the need for equity informed approaches to the care of older adults.

Key words: Long-term residential care; Nursing homes; South Asian older adults; Immigrant older adults; Ethno-cultural minority older adults; Family caregivers; Decision-making