



THE IALH UPDATE

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Improving Survivorship Care



Photo by Michelle Leman, Pexels.com

The Canadian Cancer Society has estimated that more than 75% of new cancers will occur in individuals over the age of 60. Although awareness of the medical and psychosocial needs of older adults has improved over the past 10 to 15 years, understanding the perspectives of older adults regarding survivorship care is currently limited.

In a recent publication, IALH faculty affiliate Lorelei Newton (Nursing) and colleagues in Ontario and Alberta presented findings from individuals 75 years of age and older who participated in a national survey of cancer survivors. As part of the survey, respondents were asked to provide suggestions for improving survivorship care. Specifically they were asked: "Overall, what were the two most important things that could have been done, that were not done, to help you effectively meet your needs after cancer treatment?"

Of the 1424 individuals who responded to this open-ended question, 640 individuals identified at least one improvement. Respondents provided suggestions regarding **service delivery** (e.g., information/communication, follow-up care), **relationships** (e.g., personal support, support from family members and friends), and **practical assistance** (e.g., financial aids, assistance with chores). Thematic analysis identified three key messages: offer needed support, make access easy for survivors, and show survivors they are valued.

Needed support included the provision of informational, emotional and practical supports to help individuals manage their cancer journey such as information regarding diagnosis, support for the cancer survivor as well as their family members, and assistance with side effects and activities of daily living. Easy access included the availability of programs, services located closer to home, communication and coordination among health care professionals for appointments, assistance with transportation, and financial aid. Feeling valued included being listened to by health care professionals as well as family members and friends, being provided with honest answers, and being able to discuss the implications of a diagnosis and prognosis on a personal level.

The authors concluded that "Health care providers must find appropriate avenues for effective information exchange with older adults with cancer... Proactive provision of information, compassionate communication, detailed schedules for follow-up care, and ease of access to post-treatment services are needed."

For more information on Canadian cancer statistics, go to <https://cancer.ca/en/research/cancer-statistics/canadian-cancer-statistics>. For more information on the national survey which included cancer survivors 18 years of age and older, go to <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs00520-018-4605-3>. For more information on the findings from older adults who provided suggestions for improving survivorship care, go to <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jgo.2020.09.012>

2021/2022 IALH Student Scholarships

Congratulations to the following individuals who received 2021/2022 awards through IALH:

- **Heather Hollman** - PhD student, Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education - *Ferguson Graduate Research Award in Digital Health* (\$10,000) – awarded to an outstanding graduate student whose research is in the area of digital health innovation and application
- **Cynthia McDowell** – Masters student, Psychology – *UVic Retirees Association Award* (\$1060) – awarded to an outstanding graduate student whose research is focused on individuals 55 years of age and older
- **Ashleigh Parker** – PhD student, Psychology - *Neena Chappell Scholarship* (\$1200) – awarded to an outstanding graduate student doing research on aging
- **Aleah Ross** – Masters student, Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education - *PBC Health Benefits Society Scholarship in Lifelong Health* (\$15,000) – awarded to an outstanding graduate student whose research is looking at innovations in digital health, well-being and/or cognitive health
- **Audrey Tung** – PhD Student, Geography - *Dr. David Chuenyan Lai Scholarship* (\$900) – awarded to an outstanding graduate student doing research on aging whose supervisor is also affiliated with IALH
- **Sasha Zinovich** – Masters student, Sociology - *Alice Lou-Poy Graduate Scholarship* (\$850) – awarded to an outstanding graduate student conducting research on Alzheimer’s Disease or another form of dementia

Readers’ Request – Making Stress Work for You

As part of a recent survey, readers of the IALH Update provided several suggestions for articles. The following addresses one of these requests. A longer version of this article appeared in the November 3, 2021 issue of In the Loop, which is produced by IALH’s Ladner office.

The news, popular press, health classes, and the workplace negatively portray stress as an “epidemic” and “growing plague.” The constant message that stress is negative increases the possibility that we have a debilitating mindset making it more likely to trigger an automatic response that can result in negative consequences and more stress. But, Psychology researchers at Stanford University have a message for you - an individual can use stress to improve health and well-being.

The impact of stress comes from one’s mindset about stress and not the type or amount of stress. Dr. Alia Crum, the Principal Investigator of Stanford’s Mind and Body Lab, states “Our mindset plays a powerful role in our physiology, our behaviour, and the way in which the world shows up around us.” To help harness the creative power of stress while minimizing its negative effects, Crum and colleagues suggest using a three-step approach.

Step 1: Acknowledge Your Stress (label the stress)

Rather than denying stress or dwelling upon it, name or label the stress you are experiencing. A change in the brain occurs when you acknowledge stress. Neural activity goes from the brain’s emotion and fear centre to the brain’s executive control and planning area. This more evolved part of the brain - the home of reason, logic, self-control, and empathy - allows you to choose how you respond to stress.

Step 2: Own Your Stress (determine why you feel stressed)

The next step is to “welcome” your stress so that you can link the positive motivation or personal value of the stressor. Embedded in every stress is something meaningful or important to you, and the key is to find it. Ask yourself, “Why am I feeling stressed? What is important to me about this situation?” Doing so increases the energy you have to overcome the challenge causing the stress, rather than draining your energy by avoiding or fighting the challenge.

Step 3: Use Your Stress (redirect the stress response to improve productivity)

Redirecting your stress response is essential for achieving goals and making stronger connections to things that matter most to you. Are your typical reactions to stress helping or harming the pursuit of your values and goals? If the latter, shift your focus, energy and behaviour towards using the power inherent in the stress to achieve your goals rather than detract from them.

Crum and colleagues explain that they are not advocating to view all stressors as a positive thing. Rather, they are encouraging you to “embrace your stress response as a powerful tool for helping you overcome the inevitable challenges in life that can - and will - arise.”

For more information, go to <http://sparqtools.org/rethinkingstress/>

Resources

Pathways to Lifelong Health

IALH's recent public forum, *Pathways to Lifelong Health*, showcased the depth and breadth of IALH faculty and student affiliates. Recordings from the various sessions are available on the [Institute's YouTube channel](#)

Upcoming Events

All Over The Map: An Elder Academy Event

December 18, 2021 10:00 AM - noon via Zoom

Cost: \$5.00* (All proceeds will be donated to United Way Vancouver Island South)

* Students may attend free of charge, but must register by emailing UVRAElderAcademyEvents@uvic.ca

Get to know UVic President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Kevin Hall in this 2 hour presentation. Following the Elder Academy's 2021 series that spoke about the polar regions, China and the European Union, President Hall's presentation will explore a career path that has been altered based on various global social and environmental events and will explore his evolution as an engineer, humanitarian, innovator and entrepreneur.

For more information, see <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/all-over-the-map-tickets-214810513027>.



University
of Victoria

Retirees
Association

The UVic Retirees Association provides better physical and mental health for older adults through stimulating educational experiences.

2021/2022 IALH Student Scholarship Awardees

January 20, 2022 1:00 to 3:00 pm, via Zoom

IALH will be recognizing the 2021/2022 IALH Student Award recipients Thursday January 20, 2022. All award recipients will provide a brief summary of their research. IALH faculty and student affiliates, post-doctoral fellows, associated research staff and community members are invited to attend. To register, go to <https://tinyurl.com/IALHScholarships2022>. For more information, contact Jo Ann Miller at IALHResearch@uvic.ca

30 Years of Service

Congratulations to IALH Administrator Leah Potter on receiving her 30 Year Service pin from UVic.

Holiday Closure

Please note that the University will be closed December 25, 2021 - January 3, 2022. We will reopen Tuesday, January 4, 2022.

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aging@uvic.ca



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250-721-6369