

THE IALH UPDATE

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A League of Their Own: 2SLGBTQ Sports and the Health of 2SLGBTQ People



Participants of community consultation with organizers of 2SLGBTQ recreational sports teams and leagues in Vancouver, November 2021

Contributed by Alex Wells

Alex Wells is a PhD student in the Social Dimensions of Health program and an IALH Student Affiliate.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, as British Columbia oscillated in and out of public health restrictions, many of us came to understand just how important our relationship to our community is to our health. Individuals from marginalized communities like Two Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (2SLGBTQ) people experience high rates of social isolation and health inequities in comparison to their straight and cisgender peers. As part of my doctoral program, I am working with 2SLGBTQ communities to identify the community spaces that support their health to address the health disparities and social isolation experiences. One of the spaces that frequently comes up in discussions with community members is 2SLGBTQ recreational sports.

Sports have often been spaces of discrimination and violence against 2SLGBTQ people. While this has been, and continues to be true, there is also a long history of 2SLGBTQ people creating their own teams and leagues to create safer and more inclusive sport cultures. The first 2SLGBTQ leagues in Canada began over 60 years ago. Today, there are 2SLGBTQ recreational sports teams and leagues in every province, with thousands of 2SLGBTQ people who participate regularly.

Previous research has shown that participation in these leagues can offer positive mental and physical health outcomes. Participants benefit from all the physical effects of physical activity while also building strong social support networks and challenging negative stereotypes about 2SLGBTQ people. This often results in a sense of accomplishment and pride.

In the Fall of 2021, I hosted a consultation with members of 2SLGBTQ recreational teams and leagues from across Vancouver. Organizers from 12 teams and leagues shared stories about the importance of these sports to their health, how participation had facilitated lifelong friendships, how people had become “family”. They also shared stories of the challenges and barriers that 2SLGBTQ people face, including the increasing difficulty in finding publicly accessible spaces to play, and high participation fees. These barriers result in long waitlists

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for 2SLGBTQ people who could benefit from participating as well as a lack of representation in teams from across the 2SLGBTQ community.

The consultation and ongoing discussions with 2SLGBTQ recreational athletes have formed the foundation for my PhD research. Data collection will begin in 2023. I am looking forward to sharing resources with healthcare providers and policy makers to encourage them to consider community connection as an important factor for supporting the health of 2SLGBTQ people across Canada.

Resources

A Dementia Strategy for Canada: 2022 Annual Report

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) recently released the 2022 Annual Report on Canada's National Dementia Strategy. The objectives of the strategy are to: a) prevent dementia; b) advance therapies and find a cure; and c) improve the quality of life of people living with dementia as well as their caregivers.

Highlights from the report include the following:

- The top three risk factors associated with an increased risk of dementia are: social isolation; being physically inactive; and experiencing depression. Other risk factors include being diagnosed with diabetes, hypertension or a stroke; being a heavy drinker, a smoker, or obese; and having a low education level.
- Approximately 52% of Canadians who participated in public opinion research conducted by PHAC in 2022 rated their risk of developing dementia as moderate or high. Common reasons for doing so included having a family member with dementia, a lack of exercise, or having one or more chronic health conditions.
- About 37% of caregivers providing care to individuals living with dementia experienced physical, mental and/or emotional distress compared to 19% of caregivers who provided care to someone without dementia.
- The Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) invested approximately \$49 million in dementia research in the 2020/2021 fiscal year.
- To date, PHAC's Dementia Strategic Fund has supported 15 projects focused on preventing dementia, reducing stigma associated with dementia, and enabling communities to become more dementia inclusive. In addition, PHAC's Dementia Community Investment has funded 22 community-based projects that have developed, tested, and scaled up information, resources and programs designed to improve the well-being of individuals living with dementia and their caregivers. Further, PHAC's Enhanced Dementia Surveillance Initiative has funded 10 projects focused on surveillance and data for groups within the general population who are impacted more or who are more at risk of developing dementia.

To read the full report, go to <https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/aging/assets/docs/dementia-strategy-canada-2022-report-en.pdf>

Beyond the Jargon Podcast: The Sociology of Healthy Aging and Assistive Technology

Beyond the Jargon is a podcast produced by CFUV with support from the UVic Graduate Student Society. Each episode offers an opportunity for graduate students to discuss their research in a way that peels away the jargon.

The episode entitled *The Sociology of Healthy Aging and Assistive Technology* was produced by Matilde (Matty) Cervantes Navarrete, a PhD Student in Interdisciplinary Studies and an IALH Student Affiliate. In this episode, Matty discusses findings from the *Knowledge Implementation for Scale-Up, Spread and Sustainability of Assistive Technologies* (KISS-AT) study. Several other IALH Research Fellows were also involved in this study including the late Dr. Karen Kobayashi (Sociology) as co-lead, Dr. Elizabeth Borycki (Health Information Science) as co-lead, Dr. Denise Cloutier (Geography) and Dr. Simon Carroll (Sociology).

To listen to the podcast, visit <http://cfuv.uvic.ca/cms/?podcast=beyond-the-jargon>

Congratulations



Congratulations to IALH Research Fellow Marie-Ève Tremblay (Division of Medical Sciences) on being awarded the 2022 Silver Medal for Excellence in Research. Dr. Tremblay’s research focuses on the role of microglia in aging and cognition. She co-leads the IALH Brain Health Research Cluster with Research Fellow Dr. Jodie Gawryluk (Psychology).

IALH Acting Director

IALH Research Fellow Scott Hofer (Psychology) stepped down as IALH Director December 31, 2022, having served in the role for eight years. We are pleased to announce IALH Research Fellow Nathan Lachowsky (Public Health and Social Policy) will serve as Acting Director from January 1 to June 30, 2023. Dr. Lachowsky is an internationally recognized researcher on population health, infectious diseases and sexual health.



Federal Benefits and Credits for Seniors

The January 2023 Update from the Federal Minister of Seniors identified a number of benefits and credits designed to improve financial security for seniors. This includes: a) a 10% increase in the Old Age Security (OAS) pension for seniors 65 and over which came into effect July 2022; b) a doubling of the GST credit for six months; and c) a one-time top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit to assist low-income renters with the cost of renting. For more information on the housing benefit, go to <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/taxes/child-and-family-benefits/top-up-canada-housing-benefit.html>

Research Opportunities

Exploring the Social Determinants of Health Associated with Sexually Transmitted Infections in Older Women

Jordan Monks is a masters student in Public Health and Social Policy at the University of Victoria and an IALH Student Affiliate. She is seeking participants for a research study exploring social barriers and facilitators (including social determinants of health) associated with sexually transmitted infections (STI’s) among older women in British Columbia.

To be eligible, participants must:

- identify as a woman
- be at least 60 years of age or older
- have had at least one sexual partner since turning 60
- live in British Columbia

Participation in this research study will involve answering questions that have been influenced by a preliminary literature review as well as consultations with a community advisory group. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

This study is being supervised by IALH Research Fellows Drs. Nathan Lachowsky and Kelli Stajduhar as well as Dr. Leah Tidey. For any questions, please contact Jordan Monks at jordanmonks@uvic.ca or Dr. Lachowsky at nlachowsky@uvic.ca.

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Share your thoughts on how to improve cancer care for older adults in BC

Research Fellow Dr. Lorelei Newton (Nursing) is collaborating with colleagues at UBC, BC Cancer and the Cancer and Aging Research Engagement (CARE) team on a project exploring the experiences of older adults with cancer. In 2022, the team conducted focus groups and interviews with nearly 90 British Columbians from across the province about the care and experiences of older adults affected by cancer. Through this work, 12 research and care-related priorities were generated. To share your thoughts about the priorities, take the survey by visiting <https://bit.ly/CAREBCSurvey>. The survey should take between 10 and 15 minutes.

If you have questions or need telephone assistance, please contact kristen.haase@ubc.ca or call 604-827-0979.

Upcoming Events

Winter Health and Fitness Week 2023

February 6 - 12, 2023

All Canadians, regardless of age or ability are encouraged to actively participate in physical activities, both indoors and outdoors during Winter Health and Fitness Week. An initiative of Senator Marty Deacon’s office, Winter Health and Fitness Week is endorsed by numerous national organizations (e.g., ParticipACTION, Sport Canada) and individuals (e.g., retired skier Nancy Greene Raine, Olympian Adam Van Koeverden). IALH joined the initiative in 2021.

If you are looking for inspiration in your endeavor to be more physically active, be sure to watch our social media channels ([Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)) during the week of February 6 - 12. Feel free to join in and tag us using the hashtags **#IALHMoves** and **#LetsMoveCanada!**

In addition to the week of February 6-12, IALH will be adding a regular segment in our newsletters. Entitled **#IALHMoves**, the segment will feature a member of the IALH community who has volunteered to talk about their favourite form of physical activity and how they incorporate that into their daily lives. Thank you to our volunteers! The first edition of **#IALHMoves** is included at the end of this newsletter.

More information about the National Health and Fitness Day initiative can be found at <https://www.nhfdcan.ca/>.

Healthy Aging: Insights on Place, Space and Time

Thursday February 23, 2023 6:30 - 8:30 PM

What does it mean to age well? Join Dr. Denise Cloutier, Professor in UVic’s Department of Geography and an IALH Research Fellow, to discuss this question. This course will explore individual aspects that influence health and well-being, discuss what communities are better at supporting our health and wellness and learn how earlier life experiences affect later life habits.

Please note this course is offered through Continuing Studies at UVic. For more information, contact hsadmin@uvic.ca or 250-721-8558.

To register, visit continuingstudies.uvic.ca/health-wellness.

Delivery style: Face to Face
Fee: \$65 + GST
Code: HPHE325 2023S C01

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#IALHMoves

with Taylor Snowden-Richardson - Triathlete

// I can **swim** and **run**, so why not give **triathlon** a try? //

When PhD Student and IALH Student Affiliate Taylor Snowden-Richardson isn't working in the Christie Lab, you may find her training for a triathlon. Given her busy schedule, Taylor still found time to answer our questions about how she fits Physical Activity into her daily life of being a PhD candidate in Neuroscience.

How did you get started in this activity?

I swam for UVic until 2019, and after graduating I explored other sports. I discovered a love for distance running and thought "I can swim and run, so why not give triathlon a try?" I signed up for my first race in 2020 and was absolutely hooked on the sport!

How long have you been doing this activity and what changes have you noticed over time?

Triathlon has greatly improved my mental health and physical strength! The training helps clear my mind and reduce stress, and the feeling of accomplishment after completing a race is also a great boost to my confidence and self-esteem. Additionally, the physical demands of triathlon have helped me to become stronger and more fit overall. I feel more energized and able to take on whatever challenges come my way thanks to my participation in swimming, biking and running!

What helps you to stay motivated to keep doing this activity?

The excitement of races is a huge motivator in my training. There's nothing like the thrill of race day and the feeling of crossing the finish line. The rush of adrenaline and sense of accomplishment is like no other. I love the feeling of being fully immersed in the race, giving it my all and seeing all of my hard work pay off. I don't necessarily race to win, but more race to celebrate all the hard work I have done!



// Having people that encourage you, and help keep you accountable to your goals is so important! //



Where is your favourite local place to do (or train for) this activity?

I can't imagine a better place than Victoria to train for triathlon. We have so many great local spots! In the summer you can usually find me swimming at Prospect Lake, cycling along West Saanich Road or running around Elk Lake. With so many beautiful places to train, I never get bored!

What challenges do you face trying to maintain or fit this activity into your daily routine?

As a graduate student, my days are pretty busy. My main challenge is fitting swim, bike and run workouts into my weekly schedule while still having fun!

How do you overcome this challenge?

Surrounding myself with people that support my goals is the best way to overcome any challenges I have in trying to live an active lifestyle. I am extremely fortunate to have a very supportive supervisor, who encourages me to chase my goals both in and outside of academia. He has always encouraged me to keep doing my sport, even when school is busy. Many mornings I am up bright and early to do a workout before work, followed by a second workout right after work. Having people that encourage you, and help keep you accountable to your goals is so important!

What advice would you offer to someone who would like to try or is just starting out in this activity?

Just try it!! Triathlon can seem intimidating because of the three different sports, but the people in this sport are so nice and supportive. Triathlon is great because there are so many distances you can do, there really is something for everyone! I have been to races where the athletes ranged from 6 years old to 90+ years old. If you are looking to get started, I would recommend reaching out to one (or a few) of our local triathlon groups, and get ready to have some fun.

