



THE IALH UPDATE

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Integrating a Palliative Approach to Care in Long Term Care



Whole-person palliative care models are designed to support individuals with life-limiting conditions (e.g., cancer, dementia, heart disease) with holistic care regardless of where they are at on their health and illness trajectory. Such models emphasize person-centred approaches to care and care planning with respect to disease management, disease progression, and ultimately death and include consideration of psychological, spiritual, social and emotional needs as well pain and symptom management.

A team of researchers from the Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health at UVic and Island Health recently examined challenges and opportunities associated with integrating whole-person palliative approaches to care into long term care facilities. The study, which is part of a larger four province project called SALT (Seniors Adding Life to Years), was implemented in four facilities in Western Canada. The facilities varied with respect to ownership (private/public), bed size (large/small) and geography (urban/rural) as well as care team composition (number of admitting physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, health care aides, educators and allied health professionals). Two palliative 'link nurses' were hired for one day a week at each site for the two-year duration of the project to facilitate a palliative approach to care and support education and training.

Sixteen focus groups were conducted with 80 front line workers; 31% were nurses (RNs/LPNs), 40% were health care aides, and 29% were other workers (e.g., dietitians, social workers, recreation and rehabilitation therapists, activity coordinators). Thematic analysis of recordings from the focus groups indicated that, in general, direct care workers are committed to providing high quality palliative approaches to care. However, a number of challenges related to three main themes were identified. The themes included: a) longstanding challenges in the long term care sector (e.g., staffing shortages, limited time for care provision); b) different perspectives on what a palliative approach to care is and when it should be applied; and c) differential access to education, training and support among direct care workers.

The researchers noted that "focusing attention on both quality of care and quality of life in [long term care] means committing to the fullest extent possible to the integration of a [palliative approach to care] based on an extensive and accurate assessment of each resident initially, and at regular intervals throughout their stay in [long term care]. These assessments need to consider each resident's needs, hopes, and wishes." The researchers concluded that "Going forwards, immediate efforts should be made to ensure holistic, palliative approaches to care become the standard for usual care...Strategic investments in staff and training are minimum requirements to support quality of life for residents and workers." For more information, go to <https://bmchealthservres.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12913-021-06606-x>

Congratulations to Morgan Schaeffer, 2021 Ruth A. Gardner Research Award recipient



Photo: Dr. Mary Ellen Purkis (right), Chair, Eldercare Foundation Awards Committee, presents a cheque to Morgan Schaeffer (left), 2021 Ruth A. Gardner Award recipient, at the Institute on Aging and Lifelong Health. Credit: Ashleigh Enright

Ruth A. Gardner was a Victoria psychologist and social worker who devoted her life to helping others. She gave her support to several young people, assisting them in achieving their educational goals. As a result of a bequest to the Eldercare Foundation, an endowment fund was created to provide students with clinical or applied research experience within the field of gerontology, with an emphasis on individuals with chronic conditions. The grant, which is awarded to IALH Student Affiliates, is held and administered by the Eldercare Foundation with research support provided by IALH.

The 2021 Ruth A Gardner Award recipient is Morgan Schaeffer, a Masters Student in the Department of Psychology. His research project is entitled *The Association Between Personality Traits and Incident Dementia and Predementia Syndromes*.

In the absence of a cure or effective treatment for dementia after diagnosis, it is necessary to identify those individuals who may be at greater risk of developing dementia as they age in order to effectively develop treatment or prevention strategies. As personality traits are generally stable over the lifespan, it may be possible to use them to identify risk during early and middle adulthood (before symptoms of dementia-related cognitive decline typically manifest) and allow interventions to begin earlier.

The aim of this study is to use archival data to determine the longitudinal relationship between levels of the Five Factor Model (FFM) personality traits and cognitive decline from normal cognition to Subjective Cognitive Decline (SCD), non-amnestic Cognitive Decline (naMCI) or amnestic Cognitive Decline (aMCI), and/or dementia. The five traits which make up the FFM include:

- openness (the degree to which an individual wants to try new things or go to new places);
- conscientiousness (the degree to which an individual is hardworking, orderly, and rule-abiding);
- extraversion (the degree to which an individual is sociable or assertive);
- agreeableness (the degree to which an individual maintains positive relationships with others); and
- neuroticism (the degree to which an individual experiences the world as threatening or unsafe).

Based on previous research, Morgan's hypothesis is that higher levels of neuroticism will be predictive of the likelihood that an individual will transition from normal cognition to SCD, aMCI or naMCI, and/or dementia, while lower levels of extraversion and openness will be associated with the likelihood of transition from either normal cognition or SCD to aMCI. Recent research has found that mindfulness-based cognitive therapies may be effective in reducing maladaptive neurotic traits. Thus, results from this study may directly inform new interventions for reducing risk of cognitive decline, for example, by targeting reduction of neurotic traits and encouragement of conscientiousness.

For more information on the Ruth A. Gardner Award and the Eldercare Foundation, please visit <https://gvef.org/staff-education-awards-program/>.

Upcoming Events

Masterminds Lecture Series 2022

Wednesday April 6, 13, 20, and 27 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM (PDT) via Zoom



This annual series of four lectures on Wednesday evenings in April showcases the spectrum of university research and performance. Masterminds is sponsored by the UVic Retirees Association and the Institute on Aging & Lifelong Health, with support from the University of Victoria. Registration is now open for this year's Masterminds lecture series, presented via Zoom. Please register at <https://tinyurl.com/Masterminds2022>.

Apr 6, 2022 - *Challenges and Opportunities in Community Conservation: Reflections from the Tropics*
Philip Deardon, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Geography

Community-based conservation offers great opportunities for not only countering biodiversity loss but also helping improve rural community living standards and sustainability. This presentation weaves a narrative of field case studies from SE Asia that illustrate some of the challenges and opportunities of community based conservation.

Apr 13, 2022 - *Grammar and Placenames: A Settler Linguist in Indigenous Language Revitalization*
Leslie Saxon, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Linguistics

Linguists can contribute to Indigenous language revitalization in a variety of ways, whether as "insider" linguists working in their own communities or as "outsider" linguists. In this talk, Leslie Saxon describes some research she has participated in with Indigenous communities of the NWT and reflects on how it relates to language revitalization done within communities.

Apr 20, 2022 - *Boosting and Maintaining Brain Power as We Age May Be as Easy as a Walk in the Park or Riding a Bike!*

David Docherty, PhD, Professor Emeritus, School of Exercise Science, Physical and Health Education

There has been a considerable amount of research in the last 10 years that has clearly demonstrated a direct link between physical activity and maintaining cognitive function and retaining memory as we age. Many studies suggest physical activity may delay or alleviate some of the memory loss associated with aging, including dementia. This presentation will cover how physical activity maintains brain power as we age and the amount and type of physical activity that has been found to be effective.

Apr 27, 2022 - *The Unstoppable Rise of Artificial Intelligence: Should We be Worried?*

Hugh Cartwright, PhD, Retired, University of Victoria & Oxford University Chemistry Departments

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is now widespread in industry and the media, though users are often unaware it is being employed. This non-technical talk will outline how AI works, and consider why an understanding of what lies behind AI decision-making is crucial. It will also discuss whether the development of AI could be a step towards conscious machines.

Brain Health and Healthy Aging

April 22, 2022 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM (PDT) via Zoom

Maintaining brain health is one the greatest challenges of the 21st century, as few other issues will have a similar level of effect on human longevity. Current evidence suggests that early detection and management of modifiable risk factors can reduce, or partially prevent, incidence of dementia. Dr Laura Booi, a Gerontologist and Research Fellow at Leeds Beckett University's Centre for Dementia Research in the United Kingdom, will discuss risk factors and innovative research ventures examining brain health in both at risk populations and the general public. She will draw on examples from her work as a Senior Atlantic Fellow with the Global Brain Health Institute in Trinity College, Dublin as well as her work with the PREVENT Study looking at modifiable risk factors for dementia in healthy 40-60 year olds in the United Kingdom. The link to attend is <https://tinyurl.com/BrainHealthWebinar>

Save the Date! Listening Party for *Call to Mind*

Please save Wednesday, May 18, 2022, from 7:00PM to 8:30PM for a panel presentation and podcast listening party for *Call to Mind: Audio Stories of Love and Memory Loss*. More information on the topics, speakers and registration will be presented in the April **IALH Update**. For more information about the podcast, visit <https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2022+call-to-mind-dementia+media-release>.

Research Opportunities

Participation in Health Research in BC

Are you interested in participating in health research in BC, but don't know how to get involved? REACH BC connects volunteer participants with researchers in the province who are conducting clinical trials or other studies focused on health-related issues. Through the confidential and secure REACH BC platform, interested individuals are asked to provide information about themselves, their research interests, any health conditions they may have, and their contact information. Once registered, they will be sent information about potential research opportunities. Volunteers can then connect with research teams to ask any questions they may have about a research study and to let researchers know if they're interested in participating. For more information on health research studies currently underway in BC, go to <https://www.reachbc.ca/studies>. For more information on becoming a volunteer for health research in BC through REACH BC, go to <https://www.reachbc.ca/volunteers>



How REACH BC works

Visit www.REACHBC.ca and connect in 3 simple steps:

- 1 Create a profile with your health research interests
- 2 Get matched and notified with research opportunities
- 3 Review and decide if you want to connect with the research team

Participation in Study on Climate Change and Aging



University of Victoria

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
AGED 65+

I am a research student at the University of Victoria seeking participants for a study about age and climate change. We need YOUR help!

To participate in the study, you will respond to an online survey from the comfort of your home that takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. We would like to assure you that our study has received approval from the UVic Human Research Ethics Board.

PARTICIPATION IS FREE AND ANONYMOUS

All opinions are welcome

If you would like to take part, please contact myself or my research supervisor for more information!

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