



Highlights #1 - Toward a Campus of *Wellness & Care*: Data-Informed Health Promotion with Our Oldest Seniors

Context

The rapid growth in numbers of oldest seniors (85+), rising costs of care, and new realization that health and quality of life can be retained longer necessitates a focus on health promotion and prevention innovations that can change the trajectory of declining health. We found little research on innovative practices or guidelines developed for this population (particularly low-income groups and those living with chronic illness) or their alignment with the perspectives and needs of oldest seniors. Encouraging more active and functional aging (mental, physical, social, etc.) can lead to improved quality of life and slow health decline for oldest seniors, and reduce overall health system costs.

Purpose/Issue

To share learnings from the Campus of Wellness and Care Demonstration Project Phase 1 developmental evaluation (DE) at Shepherd's Care Foundation's Kensington Village (KV) campus, and suggest implications for promoting health and wellness of oldest seniors - for Phase 2 at KV and elsewhere.

Background & Considerations

Independent and home care residents at SCF KV fall into the most challenging group, with an average age of 84, 75% of whom live with chronic illness, and many believed to be low income. In Phase 1 of the project (2013.09 to 2015.06) we tested many new care and wellness initiatives. Phase 1 data underlined the importance of applying prevention and health promotion principles to support functional aging for independent oldest seniors. Five themes are being emphasized in Phase 2:

- Engaging seniors in project development;
- Supporting resident personal empowerment in maintaining and improving their health;
- Understanding the factors that influence health and functionality with this population;
- Providing ability-appropriate activities to promote wellness; and,

- Improving access (i.e., reduce barriers) to activities and supports.

Current Action & Status

Reflection on research and DE results, and new national and international frameworks, led to project redesign in Phase 2 (2015.07 to 2017.06). We articulated key principles and concepts: functional aging, prevention and health promotion, person-centred and strength-based approaches; stages of change and motivational interviewing for empowerment and change; and, harm reduction (these will be detailed in future briefing notes).

Encouragement is key to resident engagement, participation, and investment in improving their own health and wellness. Shifting the community culture to one that values and promotes health and wellness is also essential. The project team is applying these principles and concepts, and adapting for the ages, abilities and the community at SCF KV. DE is supporting reflection, continuous improvement and knowledge mobilization.

Implications

- Create a culture and community that promotes health and wellness.
- Align project with current national and international frameworks.
- Develop an evidence-based health promotion model to guide new approaches and activities.
- Share project insights and learning from research.
- Support a policy shift – to direct resources targeted for seniors toward health promotion and prevention.

Reference:

- Sinha, S.K., et al. *An Evidence-Informed National Seniors Strategy for Canada* (October 2015)
- *Active Aging: A Policy Framework in Response to the Longevity Revolution, International Longevity Centre Brazil* (July 2015).