Social Determinants of Older Adults’ Awareness Community Support Services

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Background

- Original support for the project was provided by the Community Care Research Centre (CCRC) funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

- At a CCRC workshop, community partners identified access to care as a priority research area.

- Research team, community partners and community trainees met over several months to develop the research proposal and study methodology.
The Issue

- Number and proportion of older adults in Canada is increasing (15% expected to reach 25% in 20 years)
- Many older adults experience diminished ability to care for themselves and difficulty remaining independent in their own homes
- Community support services (CSS) offer supports that assist older adults to continue living in their own homes
- Low level of use of CSSs
- Lack of awareness is a significant predictor of unmet need for services
Community Support Services

- Definition: Community Support Services (CSSs) are delivered in the home or community to enable persons coping with health or social problems to maintain the highest possible levels of social functioning and quality of life.

- Examples of CSSs: food services, transportation services, day programs, volunteer visiting and caregiver support services.
Research Questions

1. Are older persons aware of available community support services (CSS)?

2. To what extent is access to CSS structured by the social determinants of health?
Methodological Limitations

**Acquiescence Bias**: In 71% (n=21) of studies, respondents were provided with lists of services or agency names and asked to state whether or not they were aware of each one. Number of studies provided respondents with fictitious service or agency name and deleted respondents who indicated that service from further analysis. In one study, 30% respondents reported familiarity with fictitious service.
Service providers developed a series of vignettes (short stories) that described common problems experienced by older persons or their caregivers for which CSSs are available.

Each person was asked to respond to 4 vignettes
You are an only child of a parent with Alzheimer Disease. For years you have been bringing him meals, doing his laundry, and paying his bills. Your spouse is sick and now you have to help him/her too. You are feeling overwhelmed and frustrated.

If you were in that situation what would you do? Anything else?

Can you name an organization or program in the community that you would turn to in that situation? Any other organizations or community programs?
# Mapping of Vignettes to CSSs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Vignette</th>
<th>Community Support Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Caregiving (dementia)  | You are an only child of a parent with Alzheimer Disease. For years you have been bringing him meals, doing his laundry, and paying his bills. Your spouse is sick and now you have to help him/her too. You are feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. | ‣ Adult day program (VON and others)  
 insanation Society (support groups, education series)  
 ‣ Meals on Wheels  
 ‣ In–home respite |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignette Number</th>
<th>Vignette Summary</th>
<th>Actual Vignettes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grief Recovery</td>
<td>Your spouse died two years ago. You spend a lot of time watching game shows and soap operas. Your family expects you to get on with life. You wish you had someone to talk to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Financial Insecurity</td>
<td>You are 72 years old, and your retirement savings are gone. You can’t afford to live on your Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Parental Dementia</td>
<td>You are the main caregiver for your parent who has Alzheimer Disease. You have discovered that your mother has been taking more pills than she should.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Supporting Your Parents</td>
<td>The health of your parents is rapidly deteriorating. They are no longer able to cook, clean or buy groceries. They want to stay in their own home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Caregiver Burden</td>
<td>You are an only child of a parent with Alzheimer Disease. For years you have been bringing him meals, doing his laundry, and paying his bills. Your spouse is sick and now you have to help him/her too. You are feeling overwhelmed and frustrated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Financial Abuse</td>
<td>Your son handles your banking and monitors your investments, since you are unable to leave the house. A recent bank statement shows a lot less money than you think should be there. You think your son is taking your retirement savings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Leisure</td>
<td>You are single and recently retired. You have never had time to pursue any leisure activities. You are having trouble filling your time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chronic Disease and Safety</td>
<td>You have severe arthritis in your back and knees. You fell last week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Caregiver Respite</td>
<td>Your mother who lives with you, is very confused and can’t be left alone. You want to keep her at home, but you have to go to work. The rest of the family are working and can’t help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Maintaining Your Independence</td>
<td>You have poor health and are no longer able to do your shopping, housework, or yard work. Your family members are busy and you don’t want to bother them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>You have to go for chemotherapy at the hospital several times per week. Your family and friends are unable to help you. You cannot afford to take a taxi and are too weak to take public transit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Spousal Alcohol Addiction</td>
<td>Your spouse has been retired for about a year. He or she has started to drink heavily.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

- Telephone survey of 1152 persons, aged 50 and over (random digit dialing)
  - Hired research company to conduct survey
  - Researchers listened in to pilot interviews
  - Offered draw for five gifts of $100 to increase response rate (ethics approval)
  - Completed February–April 2006

- 11% response rate
Percentage of Respondents that Answered CSSs by Vignette by First and Multiple Responses

- First Response
- Multiple Responses

1. Grief Recovery
2. Financial Insecurity
3. Parental Dementia
4. Supporting your Parents
5. Caregiver Burden
6. Financial Abuse
7. Leisure
8. Chronic Disease and Safety
9. Caregiver Respite
10. Maintaining your Independence
11. Transportation
12. Spousal Alcohol Abuse
Factors associated with more knowledge of community support services:

- Female
- Higher income
- Younger age
- Membership in clubs, organizations, churches
- Perceived social support
- Number of information sources
Results underscore the breadth and depth of the social determinants of health as important indicators of people’s differential ability to exercise some control over the health futures of themselves and the people they care for.

In a health promotion model where good health is more than the absence of disease, what matters is the ability to marshal resources to maintain independence in an interdependent social support network.

People who have scored highly on the social determinants of health are best positioned to be able to interdependently call on community support services when in need.
Knowledge Dissemination

- 12 Presentation to Community Groups
- 12 Presentations to Academic Conferences
- Multiple poster displays
- Peer reviewed publications
  - Would older adults turn to community support services for help to maintain their independence. 2009 forthcoming, Journal of Applied Gerontology
  - Older adults' awareness of community health and support services for dementia care. Canadian Journal on Aging, 2009
Knowledge and Awareness of Community Support Services: Does Social Support Make a Difference?

J. Lillie, J. Tindale, M. Denton, J. Plowe

This study is part of CIHR project: Older Adults’ Access to Community Support Services: Service Awareness and Information Sources

The Issue

Social Support Participation

Factors Affecting Knowledge of Community Support Services

Perception of Need

Information Sources

FDA

Research Questions

1. Social participation of older adults
2. Knowledge levels of older adults
3. Factors affecting knowledge levels
4. Social support participation of older adults

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Results

Discussion

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Methods

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Participants

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Poststudy Reflections

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Pre study Reflections
Knowledge Uptake
Four Projects to Improve Access

- Tackling Poverty Project (funded by the Hamilton Community Project)
- Access to Services for Multicultural Seniors (funded by the United Way of Burlington and Hamilton)
- Older Adults Programs & Service Database (funded by the Regional Geriatric Program and our study)
- Age Friendly Hamilton (funded by Ontario Trillium Foundation)
Older Adult Programs and Services Database

www.rgpc.ca/oapsd

Provides a quick and easy access for seniors, families and service providers to information on health care and community support programs and services across the HNHR LHIN.
This guide to income supplements and benefits available to Seniors was developed by the Hamilton Council on Aging.

Information in the guide was developed from current online resources published by Service Canada, Ontario Ministry of Revenue and the City of Hamilton.
Conclusions

Full report available at McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies Homepage:
www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/gerontology/

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