RIA welcomes Global Force in Dementia Innovation

Written by Kristian Partington

RIA is thrilled to welcome Dr. Allen Power to the team. His innovative thinking has inspired people around the world and is already changing the way we support our oldest citizens.

Dr. Power is a geriatrician, skilled educator and published author, with two highly successful books, *Dementia Beyond Drugs: Changing the Culture of Care* and *Dementia Beyond Disease: Enhancing Well-Being*. He’s also a connector, bringing like-minded pioneers together from all corners of the globe to inspire change. He advocates for a collaborative, more holistic approach to support older adults, especially those living with the changing realities of dementia.

It is these and many other qualities that Dr. Power brings to his new position with RIA as Schlegel Chair in Aging and Dementia Innovation.

“Dr. Power is recognized around the world for his expertise and advocacy efforts to change the way we think about aging and those living with cognitive changes,” says Josie d’Avernas, Executive Director at the RIA. “He will be an asset to the RIA as we continue to innovate and challenge current practices to ensure better quality of life for all older adults.”

In partnership with fellow RIA researchers and Schlegel Villages, Dr. Power will focus much of his energy on the enhancement of dementia support strategies, both in independent living and within long-term care and retirement settings. Transforming this knowledge into practical application in all settings will be a major priority. He also intends to maintain his busy international speaking schedule, connecting with more people around the world to not only share his work but to learn from others and foster new partnerships.

The collaborative approach to research at RIA is a major attraction to his new position, Dr. Power says. So many places around the world are doing great work but when others try to apply those efforts elsewhere, people always ask for proof. “Where’s the data?” is a question Dr. Power hears often, and rarely is there any to offer.

“Here you have an entity that not only has people doing great things but has great researchers who can actually generate the evidence-based knowledge to back up those stories of success,” he says.

To learn more about Dr. Power and his new role at RIA, visit our website at www.the-ria.ca.
RIA partnered with University of Waterloo’s School of Pharmacy to host a series of sessions for older adults to help them navigate the world wide web and find health information they can trust. The sessions were facilitated by a librarian and a pharmacist, and student volunteers provided 1-on-1 coaching. Older adults got comfortable using the technology, while understanding how to search for and assess the information they find. They were also provided with a list of reputable sites to help get them started. The sessions have been a big hit, and the collaboration continues so that more older adults can benefit - both those living in long-term care and the surrounding community. Contact Gert Hartmann (gert.hartmann@uwaterloo.ca) for more information.

**Workshops help older adults navigate the world wide web**

Planning is well underway for the 3rd Walk with Me conference taking place on March 5-6, 2018 in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The 2018 conference is once again hosted by RIA and CapitalCare Foundation. Be sure to mark your calendars!

**Who should attend?**
- Older adults, care partners, care providers, educators, policy makers, students and researchers from across Canada.

**Get involved:**
- Sponsorship opportunities are now available! Visit the website to view the options and secure your spot.
- Call for Sessions opens in June. It is a great opportunity to share your research findings or culture change success stories with delegates from across the country.
- Registration opens this Fall. Register early to take advantage of reduced rates.

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**To learn more, visit**
www.the-ria.ca/walkwithme

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GeriMedRisk: Optimizing Medications for Older Adults

Medications are an important part of managing health and well-being for many older adults. Often a number of medications are needed to support those with multiple chronic conditions. However, as the number of medications increase, so does the risk.

Thousands of older adults experience an adverse drug event (ADE) or a negative reaction as a result of medications. Previous research has shown that decreasing the number of medications can lower the risk and improve older adults’ quality of life, but it requires careful consideration. An innovative new program called GeriMedRisk aims to tackle this issue, and a pilot project is kicking off at the Centre of Excellence for Innovation in Aging.

GeriMedRisk was developed by Dr. Joanne Ho (Schlegel Clinical Scientist at McMaster University) to provide care teams in long-term care with specialized geriatric support when addressing multiple medications in older adults. Clinicians can access GeriMedRisk’s specialized team of nurses, pharmacists, and physicians by telephone or through telemedicine, so it offers reliable support and advice much more quickly than referring to a specialist.

By supporting clinicians in optimizing medications for older adults, there is potential to reduce adverse events and their consequences, for example, drug-related cognitive impairment, falls, and hospital visits. The hope is that by piloting GeriMedRisk, we can show it is not only timely and cost-effective but enhances quality of life for older adults who are reliant on multiple medications.

Research continues to explore the benefits of safety flooring

As we get older, the risk of falling increases. In long-term care and retirement homes, falls are the leading cause of injury. Despite having comprehensive fall prevention programs in place, we will never be able to prevent all falls from happening. But we can explore ways to reduce the risk of injury when falls do happen. Safety flooring offers an innovative solution.

When you fall on a safety floor, it absorbs some of the impact and makes injuries, like broken bones, less likely. However, another key consideration is making sure the floor isn’t too soft. Imagine walking on pillows – while it might provide a soft landing, you’re more likely to lose your balance and actually fall more.

Research in lab settings has shown that safety flooring helps to reduce the impact of falls without increasing risk, so researchers feel comfortable taking the next step and installing the flooring in real-world settings. In fact, there is a large-scale clinical trial currently taking place in Vancouver that is designed to see how well safety flooring works in the long-term care environment.

Although safety flooring looks promising, we need to understand how it might affect those who work in long-term care and retirement settings. A research team led by RIA research scientist Dr. Andrew Laing is starting a project to do just that. Dr. Laing and his team will interview a variety of team members, including those who provide direct support to residents, to understand what they think the pros and cons of this new technology are and how it might affect their ability to perform their jobs safely and effectively.

It’s important to understand how installing safety flooring affects everyone involved to make sure it is a solution that truly works.
Agri-food for Healthy Aging Infographics

New infographics feature Ontario-grown foods and how they can benefit health as we age

We all know how important nutrition is for our health, but choosing healthy foods can be a challenge. To help older adults make healthy choices, RIA’s Agri-food for Healthy Aging (A-HA) program has released 5 new infographics.

Each infographic features a different food – namely apples, beans, berries, soybeans and eggs - and shares facts about aging and Ontario agriculture. The 1-pagers also highlight the nutritional benefits of each food and how it relates to health for older adults. Finally, easy tips are provided to encourage older adults to consume more of these health-friendly foods.

For example, dipping apple slices in nut butter is a great way to get in 1 serving of fruit, dietary fibre, and add a little protein to your day. Beans are another great source of protein and dietary fibre, and people often forget how easily canned beans can be added to salads, soups, pastas or omelettes.

Frozen berries make consuming these delicious, antioxidant-rich foods easy all year long.

The infographics were developed by a research team led by A-HA research scientist Alison Duncan, PhD, RD (Professor, Human Health and Nutritional Sciences, University of Guelph) and are available online on the RIA website (www.the-ria.ca). They are formatted for easy printing and posting. Check them out!

Mealtimes Matter

A research team led by Heather Keller, PhD, RD, FDC (Schlegel Research Chair in Nutrition & Aging) has been exploring what residents living in long-term care eat and what factors promote better nutrient intake. The results from this national study, called Making the Most of Mealtimes (M3), highlight opportunity areas to improve nutrition and the mealtime experience.

A short video was created to share some of these findings and two newly available tools. One tool focuses on the dining environment including the physical space, and the other focuses on person-centred practices and the experience of mealtimes.

Both tools are formatted as simple checklists to help team members in long-term care reflect on their current practices, and identify some key goals to begin working towards.

The tools are part of the CHOICE+ education program which aims to promote better mealtime practices and ultimately a better experience for residents. CHOICE+ is still being researched to understand how it can have the greatest impact.

Watch the video and access the CHOICE+ tools at www.the-ria.ca/m3.

The Mealtimes Matter video and CHOICE+ tools were funded in part by the Government of Ontario to the Schlegel Centre for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care.
NEW Living Classroom Website!

We are excited to announce that the new Living Classroom website has officially launched! The website features interactive “building blocks” that help guide organizations through the process of creating their own Living Classroom. It also features a freely-downloadable PDF of the Living Classroom Implementation Guide for Colleges and Long-Term Care Homes.

The Living Classroom was first developed in 2009 in partnership with Conestoga College and Schlegel Villages. It trains future health professionals, like personal support workers and practical nurses, right in a long-term care home. Team members and residents are invited to teach or sit in on classes and the opportunities for students to gain real-life experience are endless. The model supports the development of passionate, competent, and confident graduates who are prepared to meet the needs of the sector. It also opens students’ eyes to the many rewards working in long-term care offers.

If you’re interested in exploring the Living Classroom model, visit www.livingclassroom.ca to check out the new website.

Reports released on supporting Indigenous Culture and Cultural Diversity in Long-Term Care

In March 2017, with the help of consultant Sue Cragg and the Baycrest and Bruyere Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation (CLRIs) in Long-Term Care, the Schlegel CLRI finalized two reports on Supporting Indigenous (First Nations) Culture and Cultural Diversity in Long-Term Care.

Working closely with multiple stakeholders, the team conducted a literature review to better understand the tools and resources needed to best support Indigenous culture and cultural diversity in the long-term care sector. Key findings from each report are summarized below.

To support Indigenous (First Nations) Culture in long-term care, we need:

- Tips and ideas for helping residents stay in touch with their families and community.
- Strategies for long-term care homes to work in collaboration with Indigenous community organizations.
- Information about navigating jurisdictional issues and different payment sources.
- Information about cultural values, traditions, and beliefs.
- Promotion of culture specific information about dementia care, palliative care, and end-of-life practices.
- Recipes for traditional foods, and strategies to incorporate them into the menu.

To support Cultural Diversity in long-term care, we need:

- Training for all team members on cultural competence and cultural safety.
- Leadership training that includes cultural diversity, both in academic and in-service settings.
- To provide traditional foods, and source necessary ingredients.
- Strategies to communicate with residents in their language and support language use.
- Engage care staff, supervisors, Board of Directors members and volunteers from many cultures.

The Ontario CLRIs will review the recommendations identified in the reports and strategize next steps. The full reports will soon be available on www.the-ria.ca and www.clri-ltc.ca.

The Schlegel CLRI is supported with funding from the Government of Ontario.
Welcome Dr. Kate Dupuis!

RIA is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Kate Dupuis as the Schlegel Innovation Leader in Arts and Aging. This three-year appointment is jointly funded by RIA and the Sheridan Centre for Elder Research at Sheridan College.

Kate Dupuis joined the team this January after completing her postdoctoral fellowship in the Audiology and Neuropsychology and Cognitive Health programs at Baycrest Health Sciences in Toronto. Kate obtained her PhD in Psychology from the University of Toronto, and is a registered Clinical Neuropsychologist. Her specialties include clinical assessment and intervention techniques, as well as both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies.

In her role as Schlegel Innovation Leader, Kate will explore how participating in the creative and performing arts can serve to enhance the well-being of older adults. She is passionate about discovering the personal characteristics of individuals who are drawn to participate in the arts, and identifying the physical, psychological, social, and systemic barriers to participation.

In her research program, she will develop a framework for designing, implementing, and evaluating arts-based recreation and leisure activities within the Schlegel Villages organization.

When asked what excites her most about this new role, Kate said “having the opportunity to watch and learn from older adults who are engaging in and enjoying the arts!”

Stay tuned to the RIA website (www.the-ria.ca) to learn more as Dr. Kate Dupuis advances her program of research.

Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging

Our Vision: To be one of the top 5 innovation institutes for aging in the world.

Our Mission: To enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education and practice.

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