Challenging Prejudice at Walk with Me 2018

Written by Kristian Partington

Several aspects of Walk with Me: Changing the Culture of Aging in Canada set it apart from other age-focused conferences, including the event’s commitment to diversity. Older adults, long-term care residents, their loved ones and care partners share tables with policy-makers, researchers, educators and the health care professionals directly involved in the daily support of so many older adults.

This diversity was on full display in the afternoon of Day 1 at the 2018 conference in Niagara Falls, when a panel of thought leaders tackled questions related to a type of prejudice that somehow remains acceptable in the eyes of so many in society: ageism. Moderated by Dr. Jennifer Carson, a well-known leader in the field of culture change, Stigma, Stereotypes and Segregation: The Need for a Revolution in Aging brought together Saskatoon’s Suellen Beatty, CEO of Sherbrooke Community Society and a regional coordinator with the Eden Alternative®; Phyllis Fehr a board member with Dementia Alliance International who is living in the early stages of dementia; David Kent, Vice President of the Ontario Association of Residents’ Councils; and Dr. Allen Power, author, speaker and Schlegel Chair in Aging and Dementia Innovation with the RIA.

“Ageism creates a negative reality of aging,” Jennifer said, prefacing the questions she would ask of the panel, “as it influences public policy, employment practices, standards of health care and how people are treated in society. But what’s worse is that we internalize it and the result limits our own choices about how we live and age.”

When Jennifer asked the panelists to describe an example of ageism they’ve witnessed or experienced, Phyllis spoke from the heart about the day she received her diagnosis and the instant prejudice against dementia she experienced. She was 48-years-old when she saw a gerontologist about her changing brain. She awaited the doctor’s assessment with her husband by her side. When the doctor returned, “not once did she look at me,” Phyllis recalled. “Not once did she talk to me. She looked right at my husband and said ‘your wife has...
LIVING the Dementia Journey Named Product of the Year

In November of 2017, LIVING the Dementia Journey (LDJ) was named the Best New Long-Term Care Product or Service of the Year. The award is given out based on anticipated impact for the long-term care sector by the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

LIVING the Dementia Journey was created through a collaboration between the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program (MAREP), Schlegel Villages and the RIA. It was designed with persons living with dementia and their care partners to provide a fresh perspective based on real life experiences.

The LDJ program:

• Increases understanding of dementia and provides a new perspective on the experience of living with it
• Applies a person-centred approach to provide individualized support
• Enhances skills in relationship-building to support individuals with compassion and respect
• Shares strategies to recognize, interpret and respond to personal expressions (behaviours)
• Addresses ways to tackle boredom, loneliness, and helplessness by creating opportunities for meaning, purpose and growth

The LDJ team hopes to spread the program across Ontario and beyond so that persons living with dementia are supported with compassion, dignity, and respect.

Learn more at www.livingdementia.ca.

Residents Dine with Researchers

In the spring of 2017, the RIA and the Village at University Gates hosted the first ever Resident and Researcher Lunch. Now, one year later, there have been 11 lunches and counting. Residents and team members from University Gates are joined by RIA researchers, specialists, and other experts in aging for a meal, which always includes plenty of conversation, questions, and knowledge sharing.

“It’s good to know how researchers do their work,” says Dr. Christopher Simpson, resident at University Gates. “I like going to the lunches because they show me interesting, new things that are going on!”

Through connecting with each other in this way, residents can learn about research and projects taking place in the field of aging, and experts are able to learn from residents about topics, challenges, and successes that are especially relevant to long-term care. These events are also opportunities to get to know each other personally and learn about life experiences that have led each individual to where they are today.

“The researcher/resident lunch was a lot of fun! It’s a great way to have an easy and open conversation about what research I’m doing as well as technology in general,” adds Dr. Jennifer Boger, Schlegel Research Chair in Technology for Independent Living. “People were asking great questions and had wonderful stories to share about their own experiences – I think I learned the most at the lunch! Looking forward to the next one.”
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“...dementia but she seems to be doing well so bring her back when she can no longer dress herself.”

In the eyes of this physician, Phyllis was now a diagnosis. At every step, Phyllis challenges these stereotypes and advocates for her right to live life on her own terms. She’s an avid archer, for example, and she’ll have to fight for her right to practice her beloved hobby because society deems it unsafe for a person like her to handle a bow.

Countering this deep-rooted ageism begins with youth, David offered the audience, sharing the example of how his home partners with a local high school to offer education within a long-term care setting.

“The students see a home, not an institution,” David explained. “It’s a place with warm surroundings to it and...they hear from real people who lived their lives through the depression, and the message to them was ‘count every day and make it important.’” Engaging younger generations in long-term care settings helps to challenge their negative perceptions and allows them to witness the joys of later life.

As more and more individuals are challenged to see aging differently, we can begin to tackle ageist thinking and ageist actions. By bringing people together to learn with and from each other, as Walk with Me does, we can bring profile to this social movement and change the way we age in Canada.

Volcanoes, Robots and Oobleck at the Curiosity Fair

On May 4th, the RIA in partnership with the Village at University Gates’ Innovation Team hosted a Curiosity Fair. Bringing in over 100 attendees, the event was a great success.

The goals of the fair were to create an opportunity for people of all ages to connect, and to spark curiosity in research and the world around us. RIA researchers, university and college students, residents and team members from University Gates, and children from elementary and high school, came together to share their ideas and creativity. Over 35 exhibits were on display, and presenters covered a range of topics:

- A group of high school students brought in their 120lb robot to zoom around the Ideas Café and move milk crates.
- A graduate student from the University of Waterloo helped attendees try out a virtual reality headset and exercise game created for older adults.
- Grade two students demonstrated how a volcano erupts (pictured on the right).
- Long-term care residents from the Village at University Gates presented on their experience participating in Schlegel Villages’ Olympics.

From baking to opera singing, social media to spirituality, and the part-liquid, part-solid Oobleck, it was clear that curiosity was everywhere at the fair. Thank you to everyone who supported, attended, and participated in this event!
Move More Campaign Shows Promise

Move More was developed by the RIA and Schlegel Villages in 2014 as a campaign to change the way we think about physical activity and to increase awareness of the health benefits of moving in any way throughout the day.

Over the past few years, the program has been rolling out across Schlegel Villages’ long-term care and retirement homes with the help of Move More coaches, typically team members with a passion for physical activity.

There have been many success stories, but the RIA wanted to explore the impact further. Sixteen villages were involved in an evaluation to better understand the strengths and challenges of the program, as well as to identify outcomes and recommendations. Through interviews and visits to villages, 150 participants offered feedback, including residents, Move More coaches, and village team members and leadership.

Overall, the evaluation found that there were changes in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs across residents and team members related to the importance of physical activity.

Findings showed that residents are experiencing a stronger sense of purpose and strengthening social ties with each other and team members by having more opportunities to participate in village life. Results concluded that residents are more active because of the Move More initiative, especially when encouraged by others. From making large lifestyle changes to finding small ways to move more throughout the day, residents are embracing a more active lifestyle.

“It was great to see residents pass my office and say, you know, I walked down [to] the dining room and all the way back,” recounts a Move More coach. “It’s little things like that, they normally call the nurses’ station but instead they’re getting up and walking to it... it’s just kind of changing those mind sets.”

Some participants even noted improvements in independence, appetite, and quality of sleep. Overall, the most commonly reported outcome was that Move More makes people happy. Numerous stories were shared of residents who were not only moving more, but smiling more. A sense of joy and pride was seen as residents gained mobility and independence.

Participants also highlighted that Move More contributes to making team members feel happier, more motivated, and less stressed, through participating themselves and seeing residents benefit. The initiative has also increased physical activity among team members, from developing exercise routines to walking on their break. Team members are interacting more with each other, engaging residents in moving more, and feeling more empowered within their village.

Stay tuned for the full impact report on the RIA website: www.the-ria.ca.

Folding laundry is a great example of a simple activity that can add more movement to your day.

Welcome new team members!

Our team has grown again! We’d like to welcome Holly Hebner (Project Coordinator), Barb Sutcliffe (Senior Manager of Sales and Marketing), Scott Mitchell (Knowledge Broker), and Emily Lambe (Project Officer) to the team. Please join us in welcoming Holly, Barb, Scott and Emily to the RIA family!
PSW Education Fund Reaches Long-Term Care Homes Across Ontario

The PSW Education Fund was launched in October 2017 to enhance the knowledge and skills of personal support workers (PSW) in long-term care (LTC). The Ontario CLRI received an investment of $4M to roll out the Excellence in Resident-Centred Care (ERCC) course across the province. The funding was provided by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

ERCC is a train-the-trainer course that provides PSWs with the skills to not only deliver high quality care, but to support residents’ individual needs. The course takes a person-centred approach as learners work through a series of modules on key topics (e.g., dementia, safety, mobility, and nutrition). The course is offered by the RIA in partnership with Conestoga College, and the Ministry investment enabled LTC homes to receive funding for both course fees and back-fill.

The fund has been a great success with participation from 169 homes, supporting the training of over 500 ERCC trainers and 4,000 PSWs. Participating homes were asked to take part in an evaluation and provide their thoughts on the impacts of the initiative:

- Over 70% of homes felt there was an improvement in the level of teamwork after taking ERCC.
- Nearly half of homes noted improvements in team morale, team confidence and communication.
- Over 60% of homes agreed that ERCC supported an improvement in quality of care.

The success of this initiative speaks to the demand for continuing education opportunities for PSWs and others who work in the LTC sector. ERCC is a great option for homes looking to support their team’s professional development.

To learn more about ERCC, visit the RIA website at www.the-ria.ca.

CHOICE+ Education Modules: Now Online!

CHOICE+ is an innovative program that enhances the mealtime experience for residents in long-term care. Newly released online education modules help teams understand the six principles of CHOICE+: Connecting, Honouring dignity, Offering support, Identity, Creating opportunities, and Enjoyment. The modules include short videos, interactive checklists and self-reflection questions, and provide ideas of how the principles can be applied in practice. Each module takes less than three minutes to complete.

To access the modules, visit www.choice.the-ria.ca.

Supporting Ontario’s Indigenous Residents

A priority for the Ontario CLRI has been identifying, developing, and sharing resources to support Indigenous residents living in long-term care. Building on a needs assessment completed in 2017, an advisory group was formed in April called the Ontario Caring Advisory Circle (OCAC). The OCAC includes both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members including administrators, direct care providers, and LHIN representatives. The group will meet throughout the year to provide guidance on resource development, educational opportunities and stakeholder engagement strategies.
RIA Welcomes Dr. Carrie McAiney as Schlegel Research Chair in Dementia

The RIA is pleased to welcome Dr. Carrie McAiney to our team of Schlegel Research Chairs! Her research focuses on enhancing care and support for individuals living with dementia and their family members, and improving the quality of work life for formal care partners.

This research focus will complement the work of Dr. Allen Power, who joined the RIA last year as Schlegel Chair in Aging and Dementia Innovation. The pair will work together closely, alongside those living with dementia, to advance research and improve dementia care, services and supports.

Dr. McAiney joins the RIA and the University of Waterloo from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences at McMaster University where she was a faculty member for 18 years. She is Co-Director of the Partnerships in Dementia Care Alliance, a group dedicated to changing the culture within long-term and community care to better reflect a relationship-centered approach to care. Dr. McAiney is also a member of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences Panel for the Assessment of Evidence and Best Practices for the National Dementia Strategy.

She will officially begin this new role on July 1, 2018. A public lecture is planned for June 26 from 10:00am - 12:00pm where Carrie will present on ‘Enhancing Dementia Care through Collaboration’.

To learn more about this event or Dr. McAiney’s new role, visit our website at www.the-ria.ca.

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.