

BABEL study receives \$2M grant to explore advance care planning

Written by Kristian Partington

As people age or as complex health challenges progress, difficult conversations must often be had to ensure a person's wishes are respected as they approach end of life. There are a wide range of situations to consider and questions to be asked during Advance Care Planning, which is why a team of RIA researchers, in partnership with colleagues at the University of Manitoba and

the University of Calgary, will focus on Advance Care Planning as a key component of the BABEL study.

Announced in the latter part of 2017 and gearing up in early 2018, BABEL (Better tArgetting, Better outcomes for frail Elderly) was made possible thanks to nearly \$2 million in funding from the Canadian Frailty Network. The overall study will use existing information and outcome measurements, such as International Resident Assessment Instruments (interRAI), to assess risks facing frail older adults and design better supports for improved outcomes.

The team says the study will not only result in better care and improved quality of life, but more efficient use of health care resources.

One of the first steps researchers took to begin the BABEL study was to convene a meeting of stakeholders from 24 long-term care homes across three provinces. The September meeting brought physicians, dietitians, nurses, social workers, ethicists and residents and loved ones together to

Enhancing Life

Continued on next page...

The Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging aims to enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education and practice. Innovations are developed and tested in the Schlegel Villages, and then shared to benefit older adults everywhere.

... Continued from previous page

discuss current advance care planning practices.

The presence of LTC residents and their loved ones was especially important, research team members say. The knowledge and experience they offered highlighted key themes to guide the study forward through the next 18 months.

“Your presence, as key stakeholders in the process of advance care planning, will help ground the rest of the group,” Dr. George Heckman, Schlegel Research Chair in Geriatric Medicine, and one of the study’s lead researchers, addressed residents and family members at the beginning of the meeting. “We want to know, from your perspective, what you think works, what doesn’t work and how we can improve things.”

Ultimately, the advance care planning aspect of the BABEL study is based on the premise that a person facing difficult health challenges has a right to the most detailed information possible about their situation so they may make informed decisions. At that point, their preferences must be sought and their wishes respected.

“We will all eventually need to have such discussions,” says Dr. Heckman. “And we

have the right that at crunch time, when we do get sick, our preferences will be respected, both by our health care providers, our families and our friends.

Assessing and analyzing current practices across the entire continuum of care is the first step towards making improvements. Stay tuned for updates as this exciting work continues.

For more information, please contact info@the-ria.ca or visit <http://www.cfn-nce.ca/improving-evidence-through-research-and-kt/funded-research/tg-2015-15-p-rationale/>.

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