

## In this issue

1. Focus on Caregivers
2. Call to Action
3. Of Interest
4. In case you missed it

# Waterloo Wellington



# Older Adult Strategy

Bi-Monthly Newsletter – October 2019

Issue

ONE

## Caregivers

### WWOAS Goals

**Goal 1: Age-Friendly Society and Communities.**

Waterloo-Wellington citizens age well within communities that celebrate their life in society and contributions to their communities, thriving through dignity, purpose, belonging and inclusion.

**Goal 2: Healthy Aging.** All people living in Waterloo-Wellington are exposed to the conditions and experiences that support optimal health throughout the lifecycle/lifespan.

**Goal 3: Health System Capacity.** The Waterloo-Wellington health system is designed and coordinated in a way that realizes deep functional integration and the appropriate use of health resources to achieve optimal system capacity in support of an aging population.

**Goal 4: Collaboration and Coordination.** The Waterloo-Wellington health system fully leverages and capitalizes on intra and intersectoral collaboration, offering a whole-of-community orientation to health, well-being and quality of life.

**Goal 5: Quality.** Older adults living in Waterloo-Wellington have universal access to the highest quality of care, services and supports — those that emphasize excellence in safety, effectiveness, person-centredness, timeliness, efficiency and equity.

**Goal 6: Empowerment.** The Waterloo-Wellington health system plays a pivotal and functional role in enabling the empowerment of people as they age, their caregivers and the health and social service providers they rely upon.

WWOAS reports can be accessed [here](#).

### Celebrating National Seniors Day

The Waterloo Wellington Older Adult Strategy (WWOAS) was developed through collaborative leadership, similar to that which will be required to realize sustained movement on key structural, process and outcome improvements. It proposes next steps in a journey toward a transformed health system that supports healthy aging and ensures a better quality of life for all people in our community.

Resting upon a series of priority pillars and key enablers, the WWOAS articulates six overarching and interrelated goals (listed at the left of this page) as foundational to a transformed system that best supports older adults. These important goals are offered to better support the health of an aging population, improve care experiences and increase value for the health system, those who function within it and those who rely upon it.

Today, in celebrating National Seniors Day in Canada and the International Day of Older Persons, we mark this important occasion with the inaugural issue of our new bi-monthly newsletter. We dedicate this issue to the many older adults, family members and informal caregivers who partnered with us on the development of the WWOAS and those who are directly engaged in its implementation. Their involvement in this work is imperative and their contributions are deeply valued.

Informal caregivers play a critical role in society and to the functioning of the health-care system. In fact, an estimated 75% of care needed is provided by informal caregivers. Given that health system sustainability relies heavily on the contributions of informal caregivers, developing a comprehensive suite of resources and services to support family caregivers and safeguard their health and well-being has never been more important. The economic stresses placed on family caregivers remain high.

We know that not all family members see their role as being caregivers. Some are willing to be more involved, while others do not want to be involved in a direct caregiving roll. We also know that many family caregivers spend any free time they have just getting caught up. The time is not restful. They typically stop doing activities that matter to them.

Although many caregivers find this to be a rewarding role, they often carry it out at the expense of their own health and well-being, resulting in strain. Research suggests that the level of caregiver strain increases with the number of chronic conditions the older adult has, which in turn increases negative health outcomes and health service use by caregivers.

Patients and caregivers can often feel confused and frustrated because they are uncertain about how the “system” fits together. In response to the widely held perception of the health system being far too challenging to navigate, much more must be done to streamline the system to help support caregivers to navigate it.

Developing a comprehensive suite of resources and services to support family caregivers and safeguard their health and well-being has never been more important. The economic stresses placed on family caregivers remain high. Apart from income and job protection, family caregivers need supports such as respite care, system navigation assistance, information and education, home care supports and bereavement care.

Indeed, collective efforts to mobilize actions of broader community partners will help to better meet the needs of older persons in Waterloo-Wellington.

# Some recommendations included in the WWOAS Framework

- Work with family and caregivers design, develop and offer workshops, presentations, information sessions and access to credible information sources – reference materials, clear pathways and decision support tools.
- Work collaboratively with local post-secondary education partners to improve outcomes and impacts at societal, community, organizational, provider, care and service recipient and informal caregiver levels.
- Develop a Provincial Caregiver Strategy with an emphasis on the needs of caregivers of older adults.
- Simplify communication about how the health system is structured and integrated so that everyone has a better and common understanding. Older adults, their family caregivers and even health-care providers experience challenges in navigating the complex health and social service systems. There is a pressing need to move from a system that is characterized as *structurally complex* to one that is more *functionally integrated*, explicit and simplified — one that is understandable and one that clearly articulates who is responsible for what in the delivery of value-based services. Designing and communicating the structural and functional elements of a streamlined health system can help everyone to better navigate and interact with it.
- Collect, monitor and report on meaningful measures and indicators, in addition to the more traditional clinical outcomes. A transformed health system that best supports people as they are aging involves moving forward, in a coordinated fashion, with the collection, monitoring and reporting of comparable patient-reported experience measures (PREMs) and patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs). It offers online access to personal health information to people and their caregivers, allowing them to decide who they will share this with, within their circle of care, as defined by them.
- Facilitate access to resources that would be useful and provide guidance to older adults and their families. Facilitating knowledge mobilization initiatives and activities to promote anticipatory guidance related to healthy aging and better care for seniors by facilitating access to resources (i.e., navigational tools, knowledge repository and respite support) so that clients and caregivers know what to expect needs to happen in a more intentional and coordinated fashion. This may begin by working with families and caregivers to design, develop and offer workshops, presentations, information sessions and access to credible information sources – reference materials, clear pathways and decision support tools. Improving awareness about community support services in all sub-regions would be a good place to start.
- Introduce new roles and functions that better support connections, linkage and navigation within the health system, such as senior's health services advisors or community health workers and integrators. Knowing where to start or where to turn during times of need can enable older adults and their caregivers to experience a heightened sense of health and empowerment. These roles may be especially important in rural areas of when working to engage certain populations.
- Develop a comprehensive suite of resources and services to support family caregivers and safeguard their health and well-being. Apart from income and job protection, family caregivers need supports such as respite care, system navigation assistance, information and education, home care supports and bereavement care.
- Make good use of new provincial investments in caregiver education and training by flowing funds to local community groups, post-secondary institutions and other organizations to design and develop programming that enhances the capabilities of caregivers, beginning with groups that are in highest need of more supports, including Indigenous and Francophone residents.
- Increase the availability of services and supports that build skills for coping, adapting to change and providing care. In an effort to prevent or minimize caregiver distress, increase the availability of services and supports that build skills for coping, adapting to change and providing care. This may include informational resources available online or workshops, peer groups and health teaching opportunities to learn about self care.
- Develop direct one-on-one peer support and mentoring services for older caregivers, perhaps through a paid employment opportunity that could improve the social connectedness and financial status of an older person with lived experience.
- Make peer support groups and resources easily available by increasing community awareness.
- Increase locally available respite service capacity according to need.
- Decrease waste and frustration for caregivers by creating open access to certain information within the circle of care, as defined by clients and caregivers.
- Provide older adult patients and/or caregivers with a standardized template to help them prepare for their visits with primary care teams before they arrive. This may help improve the way in which key information is communicated and increase efficiency. The administration of screening questions to patients, for instance, using mobile tablets while they are waiting to be seen or before they arrive at the health centre, can also offer an efficient way to gather important health assessment data.
- Better support older members of our community and their families and caregivers through transitions in health and care. Move towards care and service models that are *relational*, not *transactional*.
- Commit to using appropriate language and style when communicating with patients, families and caregivers, especially when passing on critical information. Offer written instructions to patients and families wherever possible. Verbal messages are generally unclear and are often not retained. This is seen to be both helpful and safer.

# Of Interest

**1) IHPME Masterclass: Implementing Integrated Care (emphasis on older adults)**

*What:* One-Day session

*When:* October 10, 2019 from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm

*Location:* Bridgepoint Health, 10th Floor Auditorium

*More info* [here](#)

*Register* [here](#)

**2) Waterloo Wellington 10th Annual Knowledge Exchange in Geriatrics**

*Title:* Journey with Me: Supporting Older Adults & Families in Care

*What:* Knowledge exchange event

*When:* Wednesday November 13th 2019

*Time:* 8:45am - 3:00pm (lunch will be provided)

*Location:* St. George's Banquet Hall - 665 King St. N. Waterloo

*Audience:* Health care professionals providing care and service in collaboration with older adults and/or family caregivers

*For more information please contact:* [sheli@hospicewaterloo.ca](mailto:sheli@hospicewaterloo.ca) & [jelliott@cmhaww.ca](mailto:jelliott@cmhaww.ca)

*Register* [here](#) (\*Older adults planning to register, please contact [azarnke@cmhaww.ca](mailto:azarnke@cmhaww.ca))

*Fee:* \$100\*

**3) Ontario Health Teams (OHT)**

*OHTs are being introduced to provide a new way of organizing and delivering care that is more connected to patients in their local communities. Under Ontario Health Teams, health care providers (including hospitals, doctors and home and community care providers) will work as one coordinated team - no matter where they provide care. Learn more* [here](#).

# In Case You Missed It

**1) Crisis in Caregiving, White Coat, Black Art on CBC Radio**

*What:* Podcast featuring Dr. Brian Goldman

*Listen to it* [here](#)

**2) Leading health system transformation for older adults in Waterloo Wellington**

*What:* Story

*Who is featured:* Liz McLennan, current co-chair of the Patient and Family Advisory Committee for the Waterloo-Wellington LHIN, past member of the WWOAS Reference Group and current member of implementation workstream focusing on Linkage, Coordination and Navigation.

*Read it* [here](#)

**3) Senior Friendly Caregiver Education Project (Regional Geriatric Programs of Ontario)**

*What:* Webinar

The Regional Geriatric Programs of Ontario (RGPO) is co-designing educational resources with family/friend caregivers of seniors living with frailty. RGPO hosted focus groups with caregivers across Ontario to understand experiences, learning needs, and preferred method(s) of learning through a project entitled the Senior Friendly Caregiver Education Project. The focus groups were on topics related to frailty: delirium, mobility, continence, nutrition, pain, polypharmacy, and social engagement. On Sept 19, 2019, this webinar presented information about how and what caregivers prefer to learn about frailty and some key messages for health care professionals that may support clinical practice.

*Presenters:* Sarah Gibbens, RN, MN, GNC(C), PhD(c) and Susan Bacque, BSc, MA from the RGPO

*Access the recording* [here](#)

*Access the slides* [here](#)



*Looking for more information?  
Have something to share?*

Please contact:

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*WWOAS reports can be accessed* [here](#).