

Sharing Knowledge to Improve Exercise Opportunities for People Living with Dementia

By Liz Snyder

Researchers, people with lived-experience, care partners, exercise providers and other community members came together to talk about ways to provide dementia-friendly exercise at a 'Think Tank' recently hosted by the RIA.

RIA research scientist, Professor Laura Middleton, brought this group together to co-develop tools, referred to as the *Dementia-Inclusive Choices for Exercise (DICE) toolkit*.

The DICE toolkit is meant to expand the exercise and recreational programs available to people living with dementia. It aims to increase the ability of exercise providers to engage with, include, and support people living with dementia in existing exercise



Laura Middleton at the DICE Think Tank

programs. It will also connect people living with dementia to suitable programs and providers.

Middleton says it's important for exercise providers to recognize that no two people living with dementia are the same. Some may have little or no trouble learning and adhering to a new exercise program. Others may find it difficult for a variety of reasons such as memory challenges, sensitivity to noise or poor balance. Some may have a lot of experience with sports and exercise while some may have very little.

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

“The supports people need and the strategies you use will vary between each person throughout the time you work with them. People living with dementia have good days, where they need little support, and more difficult days when they may need more support,” she says.

With DICE, Middleton hopes to increase the number and quality of exercise opportunities available to people living with dementia so she wants the resource to resonate. That’s why she brought together a diverse group of people who could be users of the toolkit or have other expertise in the area.

“We prioritized and fleshed out what is going to be included and how we will deliver this information to the people we want to use it.”

There are currently few exercise providers that have any training regarding dementia, says Middleton, so one priority of the toolkit is to provide information about dementia to exercise providers. This will enable them to better understand dementia and better communicate with people living with dementia. Another priority is finding ways to let people living with dementia know that exercise is beneficial and a good part of living well with dementia.

“The benefits of exercise are broad. There are physical benefits like improved mobility, daily function, cardiovascular health. But just as important are feelings of social well-

being and inclusion. Dementia-friendly exercise programs and facilities can support people living with dementia to be engaged, and live healthy, active lives.”

Next, Middleton and her team will pilot the toolkit in several sites across Canada to get feedback on its usefulness in the real world.

This is the fifth Think Tank hosted by the RIA. The purpose of RIA’s Think Tanks are to engage leading researchers from across the globe and key stakeholders like long-term care and retirement home residents, family members, health care practitioners and policy makers to discuss trending topics related to healthy aging. Together, participants share their perspectives and decide on key areas of focus and next steps for future research.

STAY CONNECTED!



Follow us on Twitter:
[@SchlegelUW_RIA](https://twitter.com/SchlegelUW_RIA)



Like us on Facebook:
fb.me/SchlegelUWRIA



Email Us:
info@the-ria.ca



Check us out Online:
www.the-ria.ca

