

RESEARCH
annual report

20

Table of Contents

4	message from leadership
5	vision 2025
6	our team
7	class of 2020
8	the numbers
9	sharing our work
10	research partnerships
12	a bright light in a dark time
15	spotlight corner
16	impact stories with Banu Sundaralingam
19	spot it. prevent it!
20	2020 junior researcher development winner
21	creating the senior friendly 7

VHA Home HealthCare is a national registered charity that enables and supports creating independence and spectacular care in Ontario.

Registration number: 89105 2094 RR0001.

message from leadership



The home care sector in Ontario is facing significant change with new regulations on the horizon, major health system reform underway and the world in the throes of a pandemic. It is more important now than ever before that home care organizations are committed to leading, participating in and supporting research to ensure new structures, processes and practices are evidence-informed and meet the quadruple aim of improved client and clinician experience, lower system costs and better health outcomes. Actually it's not just important, it is essential, as how do we know what works if we haven't tested it out first? I am proud to say that VHA Home HealthCare is an organization that is very committed to research and this Report shares the accomplishments of the first year of its 2020-2025 Research Vision focused in the areas of: strengthening data systems, attracting and supporting home care researchers and generating and sharing new knowledge in critical areas such as integrated home care services, infection prevention and control and best care for clients impacted by chronic disease and mental illness. Enjoy the report and we look forward to bringing you more stories of success over the next four years.

Kathryn Nichol, RN, PhD
Vice President Quality, Best Practice,
Research and Education & CNE

As we have all experienced, 2020 was a year full of challenges and achievements. I am extremely proud of the resilience and commitment shown by all VHA colleagues, including the research team, who were eager to be part of the solutions needed to ensure we delivered on our core belief of *"spectacular care focused on quality improvement and safety"*. With a pause placed on many key research partnerships early in the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to use our research skills and expertise from different disciplines to offer insights and solutions to support our COVID-19 response. VHA Research members were key contributors to the management and distribution of personal protective equipment, administrative support to the COVID-19 Incident Command Team and provided extensive data analysis and interpretation service to the Operation and Risk Management focused committee. Their unique talents added to the collective effort to safeguard the health and safety of all our providers, clients, and families.

This year also marked the close of our inaugural Research Vision and the launch of Research Vision 2025 to align with VHA's new strategic plan "CARE to Transform". VHA's strategic Research Vision 2025, charts a way forward where we will grow and influence an evolving system to better reflect the

values and priorities of people and organizations like VHA to ensure our voices are representing home care. We have provided a snapshot here of our key research strategies and focus areas but encourage you to review our full document.

In the following pages you will see the tremendous research productivity achieved over the past year with particular emphasis on some of our more impactful programs of research. Programs such as Spot it! Prevent it! - workplace violence prevention efforts that complement our HR team's Valued at VHA program; the practical clinical supports offered to our Personal Support teams through the Senior Friendly 7 research and finally, as we continue to grow, we highlight the stories of some of the researchers and clinicians who are passionate about home care and making things better for VHA's teams and the people we are proud to serve. This report is a celebration of their achievements and dedication to making meaningful change.

Sandra McKay, PhD, MBA
Director of Research

vision 2025

By 2025 VHA Research commits to becoming a transformational leader in the home and community health sector, creating solutions for clients, families and providers that embody our values, expertise and experiences.

The following priorities are foundational components of our vision that will cut across our areas of research focus:

- Data First
- Powerful Partnerships
- Creating Home Care Scientists

Our 2020-2025 areas of research focus are closely aligned with VHA's strategic goals and are defined by the following three categories:

- Better Care
- Safer Teams
- A More Connected System

our team



Kathryn Nichol

VP, Quality, Best Practice, Research and Education and Chief Nursing Executive



Sandra McKay

Director of Research



Emily King

Manager, Research Operations



Sonia Nizzer

Clinical Research Coordinator II



Arlinda Ruco

Research Associate

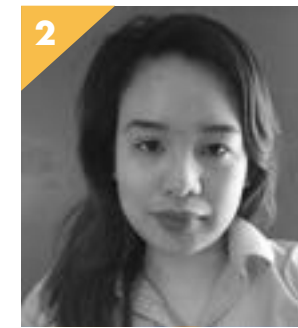


Katherine Zagrodney

Research Associate

class of 2020

Our commitment to cultivate an internal culture of curiosity and discovery did not stop in 2020. We continued to engage with junior researchers, students and point-of-care providers in research and quality improvement efforts despite the shift to working virtually and from home. Below is our esteemed class of 2020.



1 Vivian Hung
Queens University

2 Lady Bolangata
University of Toronto

3 Holly Opara
Western University



4 Emilia Cotter
McGill University

5 Hana Asfaw
Personal Support Worker
Champions of Change Fellow

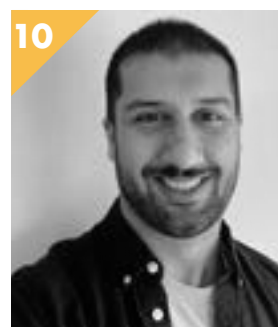
6 Chrissy Froude
Personal Support Worker
Champions of Change Fellow



7 Safiullah Barat
Registered Nurse
Champions of Change Fellow

8 Latha Jaya
PSW Advisor
Central East Team

9 Tamanna Rahman
Waterloo University



10 Gary Grewal
Western University

11 Marianne Saragosa
University of Toronto

the numbers

30

ACADEMIC TRAINEES

31

ACTIVE STUDIES

5

RESEARCH FELLOWS

14

CLIENT PARTNERS ENGAGED

6

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

36

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

19

GRADUATE STUDENTS

22

CO-INVESTIGATORS

Grants

6

Manuscripts Submitted

7

Abstracts Submitted

18

applications submitted

9

awarded

sharing our work

Publications

Downey S, McKay S, Feng P. (2020). Towards Value in an Integrated Care Environment: Early Lessons from an Ontario Health Team. *Healthcare Papers*. 2020 Feb 29;19(1):11–8. DOI: 10.12927/hcpap.2020.26159

Nizzer S., Ryan S., McKay S. (2020). ‘The Little Things’: Exploring Perceptions and Experiences of Client and Family-Centred Care through Photovoice, *Patient Experience Journal*, 7(1), 31-43. DOI: 10.35680/2372-0247.1368

Gordon D, McKay S, Marchildon G, Bhatia RS, Shaw J. (2020). Collaborative Governance for Integrated Care: Insights from a Policy Stakeholder Dialogue. *International Journal of Integrated Care*, 2020; 20(1): 3, 1–11. DOI: 10.5334/ijic.4684

Kim B., McKay S., Lee J. (2020). Predicting frailty with a consumer-grade wearable device in Canadian home care service clients: A proof-of-concept study. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 2020; e-pub. DOI: 10.2196/19732

Plummer C, Smith KA, Chandler J, Ash P, McMillan S, Di Prospero L, Morassaei S, Nichol K. Building capacity in health professionals to conduct quality improvement: evaluation and insights from a collaborative inter-organizational pilot program. *Journal of Nursing Care Quality*: Oct 19, 2020 - epub ahead of print - doi:10.1097/NCQ.0000000000000520

McGilton K, Vellani S, Krassikova A, Robertson S, Irwin C, Cumal A, Bethell J, Keatings M, Burr E, McKay S, Nichol S, Puts M, Singh A, Sidani S. (2020). Understanding transitional care programs for older adults who experience delayed discharge: a scoping review. *BMC Geriatrics*, in review.

Awarded Project Grants

Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease. Pilot Study Grant - Homecare PSW Attitudes towards working during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A qualitative study. Ruco A., Nizzer S., Holness L., King E., McKay S., Nichol K. \$20, 000

Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease. Factors influencing Facial Protective Equipment use by Home Care Workers during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic. Nichol K, Holness DL, McKay S, King E, Zagrodney K. \$20, 000



Sandra McKay (R) shares findings from a study with VHA providers

Ryerson University Fast Funding for COVID-19 Science. The impact of Covid-19 on pediatric home care practices for children with medical complexity: Policy recommendations and practice guidelines. LeGrow K., Espin S., McKay S., Cohen E., Keilty K., Spalding K. \$50, 000

Registered Nurses’ Foundation of Ontario Nurse Innovator Award. Connected Care on the Go. Keilty K., Chiu S., Wong M., McKay S. \$50, 000

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. COVID-19 Resilience Enhancement with Social Training (CREST): Elucidating the Role of Social Factors in Motivating Collaborative Exercise. Chignell M., King EC. \$25, 000

Conferences

Nichol K., McKay S., Ruco A., Edwards B., Morgan D., Holness L. Spot it Prevent it! Creating a safe work environment for personal support workers caring for clients with cognitive impairment. *Advancing Patient Safety & Integrated Risk Management HIROC*, November 2020.

McGilton, K.S., Vellani, S., Babineau, J., Puts, M., McKay, S., Bronskill, S., Wodchis, W., Nichol, K., McElhaney, J., & Sidani, Souraya. (2020, May 26-29). Enhancing our understanding of transitional care programs [Oral Presentation]. 2020 CAHSPR Conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. (Conference cancelled)

Mottari M, Ruco, A, King EC. Whole vs Hole: Enabling Community Nurses to Implement Holistic Wounds Care. *Wounds Canada: 2020 Fall Virtual Conference*. October 2020

research partnerships

VHA Home HealthCare's strength in research excellence is supported by partnerships with established institutions and creates opportunities that generate new knowledge and further home care research. We would like to extend our gratitude to the following research institutions that supported our work in 2020.

AGE-WELL

AwakeLabs

Canadian Standards Association

Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation

Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD)

Centre for Research Expertise for the Prevention of Musculoskeletal Disorders (CRE-MSD)

Healthcare Insurance Reciprocal of Canada (HIROC)

Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital

Home Care Ontario

Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids)

Michael Garron Hospital- Toronto East Health Network

Ontario Occupational Health Nurses Association

Public Health Ontario (PHO)

Public Services Health and Safety Association

Queen's University (Belfast)

Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto (RGP)

Ryerson University

-School of Health Services Management

-Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing

SE Health

SenSights.AI

The Wilson Centre

Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, UHN

Unity Health Toronto - St. Michael's Hospital

University College (Dublin)

University of Guelph

University of Toronto

-Institute of Health Policy, Management and Evaluation (IHPME)

-Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing

-Department of Physical Therapy

-Department of Occupational Therapy

-Department of Mechanical & Industrial Engineering

University of Waterloo

VON Canada

Winterlight Labs

Women's College Hospital

-Institute for Health Systems Solutions

-Centre for Digital Health Evaluation

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)

RESEARCH FEATURES



“ Substantial investments are being made in high-quality and promising research, projects are moving forward quickly, and partners are coming together to look for innovative and collaborative solutions. ”



A BRIGHT LIGHT IN A DARK TIME

How investments in research are helping VHA innovate

WRITTEN BY Ellen Gardner & Tracey Turriff

As we continue to grapple with COVID-19's second wave, one positive outcome of the uncertainty we have all faced throughout the pandemic has been the rapid acceleration and funding of COVID-related research across Canada and around the world. Health care partners have banded together to provide care in their communities and have joined forces to seek solutions through research.

This race to gather information and look for answers has removed many of the usual barriers and bureaucratic obstacles for research projects. Since April, the Canadian government has invested more than \$109M in grants for COVID-19 research and VHA Home HealthCare (VHA) is now involved in many important projects as a result of this funding opportunity.

“If there are bright spots in these perilous times, this is certainly one of them,” said Carol Annett, President and CEO of VHA.

“Substantial investments are being made in high-quality and promising research, projects are moving forward quickly, and partners are coming together to look for innovative and collaborative solutions.”

VHA's existing strong partnerships have allowed for quick action as projects have been developed.

“We have been able to leverage our strengths and those of many ongoing partners,” said Sandra McKay, Director of Research at VHA.

“This has allowed us to act quickly to put teams together and submit applications for a number of interesting grants. The many projects we are now part of has reinforced the crucial role of home care during the pandemic,” Sandra added.

The projects range in focus, with some studying new methods of providing care that have quickly developed during the pandemic, such as virtual care, while others are examining opportunities for addressing social isolation during COVID-19. Other studies are exploring the ways different populations have been affected and issues impacting health care workers during the pandemic.

“Personal Support Workers (PSWs) do daily, important, heroic work and play a critical role in our health and social care system,” Sandra noted. “It is important that we understand the impact COVID-19 is having, both in terms of the overall PSW labour supply as well as the effect of repeated use of personal protective equipment (PPE).”

With numerous new research projects underway since the start of the pandemic, VHA anticipates this research will help guide practices to continue to make care as safe as possible for staff and service providers and for clients and families and will help inform advancements in home care today and in a post-pandemic world. As Carol notes, "I'm sure that what we learn through these projects will ultimately transform the face of home care."

Here are some of the COVID-19 focused research projects VHA is currently involved in:

Virtual Care in the COVID-19 Era: Equity Concerns; partnership with Women's College Hospital. This project explores challenges and best practices in enabling access to, uptake of and engagement with virtual care in home care and other care contexts for individuals in underserved communities. The project will describe barriers and facilitators to equity-focused virtual care and will provide recommendations on technology and program elements required to enhance equity in delivery of virtual care.

COVID-19 Resilience Enhancement with Social Training (CREST): Elucidating the Role of Social Factors in Motivating Collaborative Exercise; partnership with Centre for Healthcare Engineering, University of Toronto. This project will help us understand how combining social collaboration with the latest technology can improve healthcare outcomes by motivating more exercise in those who need it. This is a unique opportunity to evaluate how well physically remote social collaboration through exercise can not only improve healthcare outcomes but also reduce social isolation and increase resilience in our clients, who live at home and often find it difficult to take part in 'in-person' collaborative exercise programs.

Ryerson University Fast Funding for COVID-19 Science- **The impact of Covid-19 on Paediatric home care practices for children with medical complexity: Policy recommendations and practice guidelines;** partnership with Ryerson University & SickKids Hospital. We are conducting a study to better understand the impact COVID-19 has had on paediatric home healthcare services for children with rare diseases and/or complex care needs and provide meaningful real-time information to inform paediatric home healthcare policy recommendations and practice guidelines.

Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD) - **Home care PSW Attitudes towards working during the COVID-19**

pandemic: A Qualitative Study; partnership with University of Toronto. The experiences of PSWs working in home care during the COVID-19 pandemic are not well understood. We believe it is important that we understand more about the experiences of PSWs working during the COVID-19 pandemic so that we can better support them in their role. Specifically, we are interested in learning more about PSWs' attitudes, motivations, challenges and how supported they feel during this time.

Ryerson Masters in Community Health Management program capstone project: **Evaluation of VHA's crisis response to COVID-19.** Using the Observe, Orient, Decide and Act (OODA) decision-making model and working closely with key members of VHA's Incident Command Team (ICT), this project will review and summarize the activities of key working groups and the impact on point-of-care staff. A final report will be presented to the VHA senior management team to inform future pandemic response.

Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease (CREOD)- **Factors influencing Facial Protective Equipment use by Homecare Workers during the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic;** partnership with University of Toronto. This project will see a literature review and questionnaire development to provide the evidence-based foundation for ongoing work in this important area of study where we will examine the use of facial protective equipment by home care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Labour supply during a pandemic, particularly of PSWs; a VHA study. This study seeks to describe and examine how COVID-19 has impacted PSWs providing home care and clients receiving home care from VHA. This study will provide useful knowledge surrounding the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on PSWs and clients within a home care setting, and an improved understanding of how policy variables, including wage-related incentives, have impacted PSWs in home care. |

WHAT DO YOU LOVE MOST ABOUT YOUR ROLE AT VHA?

I love that VHA is investing in research. I feel that makes them a true leader in the field of home care-based research and I am proud to be a part of that. Within VHA's Research Department, I am surrounded and supported by a group of intelligent, hard-working, and like-minded people interested in making a difference in home care.

BASED ON YOUR WORK, HOW DOES RESEARCH MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE?

One overarching goal of my research is to put the spotlight on PSWs and increase recognition of PSWs in home care. Compared to other frontline health care workers, historically PSWs have often been overlooked in research, planning, and policy - I want to change that. For instance, my work provides insight and information that can be used to address health human resource challenges as a key issue for the PSW workforce.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO FOCUS ON PSWS IN YOUR RESEARCH?

There are many Nurses in my family and my Mom is a Social Worker, so I grew up hearing about health care topics from the frontlines at the dinner table. I was inspired to focus on PSW research more specifically after volunteering in a setting that provided older adult care. I saw how vital PSWs were to providing care to older adults and my eyes were also opened to the various issues faced by PSWs. I have been deeply invested in both learning about and contributing as much as I can to information that can be used to address challenges faced by PSWs ever since. Through my research, I hope to increase awareness, advocate, and address challenges faced by many PSWs.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO ADD?

Thank you to every single PSW for the work that you do!

SPOTLIGHT CORNER

with Research Associate
Katherine Zagrodney

WRITTEN BY Isabel Terrell



WE CAUGHT UP with Katherine Zagrodney, our new Research Associate about what it's been like joining the team and her vital work as a health economist. Katherine, is a PhD candidate in Health Economics, Health Services Research at IHPME, University of Toronto

Impact Stories with **Banu Sundaralingam**

IN HER OWN WORDS

In 2017 VHA Home HealthCare partnered with UHN Collaborative Academic Practice (CAP) program to offer a fellowship program to support point-of-care providers to engage in successful quality improvement work. The VHA-UHN Research Fellowship provides unique opportunities for clinicians to improve quality of client care by leading a quality improvement project, related to the organizations' strategic priorities, and to engage in ongoing dialogue and learning about leadership and spearheading positive change.

From September 2019 to March 2020 Banu joined the Collaborative Academic Practice and embarked on her professional development journey to address caregiver needs in the community.

Banu Sundaralingam, an OT with VHA Rehab Solutions, was selected as recipient of the 2019 VHA-UHN Research Fellowship for Rehab with her project titled Addressing Caregiver Needs in Community Care.

The Challenge In the community we work with family caregivers who spend a majority of their time and energy taking care of chronically ill loved ones. There are 8 million caregivers in Canada and more than half report that they are stressed and unable to cope with caregiving responsibilities. Caregivers save Canada's health care system approximately \$31 billion annually; however, they are financially, emotionally, and physically distressed, and are more at risk of acquiring mental and physical health issues because their needs are neglected. Our elderly population is doubling, the prevalence of chronic illnesses is increasing, the average lifespan is increasing, and the needs of caregivers is growing.

In my past OT practice, I used to encounter burn-out caregivers on a weekly basis. Service providers have limitations in their practices, such as high caseloads, limited time and visits and lack of resources and education on managing caregiver burn-out, therefore the needs of caregivers are often overlooked and challenging to address in a limited time frame.

I wanted to further explore if addressing caregiver needs would be an organizational need as well. I looked further into the resources available through VHA and I connected with my colleagues about their difficulties with addressing caregiver needs. It appeared to be that VHA was lacking resources and educational materials for service providers to address caregivers' needs in the community. This fellowship opportunity was a blessing in disguise in order start a conversation about caregiver needs with service providers.

The Improvement The aim of the project was to increase service providers' confidence level and use of resources in providing caregiver support education in the community by 30% by March 2020 within the Central Team at VHA. This project involved multiple steps in order to address the challenge.

First, I explored the gaps that existed at VHA related to addressing caregiver needs and discovered that there were insufficient resources available on The Loop and no caregiver education sessions available. Furthermore, on the electronic charting system VHA OTs use [EMRI] to complete client assessments, I discovered some gaps. Although caregiver burn-out can be assessed and noted in the OT global assessment, there is a health teaching strategies section on EMRI which provides service providers (SPs) recommendations for different problem areas assessed, however there are no recommendations for addressing caregiver needs.

Next, I dove into doing a literature review on best practices caregiver assessments and interventions to confirm the evaluation plan and possible interventions for this project. I met with my peers and completed focus groups and one-on-one interviews with caregivers to further inform the development of my intervention before moving onto pilot-testing. Overall, I was able to develop a collection of great resources: a resource manual, educational handouts and an education session for SPs.

The Impact The first intervention was to email "tips of the day" to service providers on the central team. I wanted to provide a form of "pre-education" to the actual caregiver education session. I created infographics about topics related to caregiver interventions, and I emailed service providers every other day for two weeks as a "tip of day".

Towards the end of the February I conducted an education session for service providers in the Central Team. I used this opportunity to discuss how to assess for caregiving needs and interventions for caregivers. I really tried to emphasize to service providers that they already have pre-existing knowledge to address caregiver needs, and they can use that knowledge and tailor it to

caregiver interventions. I tried to make the education session as interactive as possible. I used a tool called poll everywhere and service providers were able to post answers to questions I asked throughout the session.

Using evidence-based literature, some grey literature and the results of the needs assessment, I created a series of handouts that service providers can use for their own knowledge but to mainly provide to caregivers during their visits.

The topics of the handouts included: Caregiver Health and Wellness, Caregiver Financial Management, Education on Navigating the Healthcare System and Caregiver Activity Planning. I also created a community resource manual which is a compilation of community services in the North York and York region, ranging from caregiver support groups, friendly visiting services, transportation services etc. All of these resources can be found on the Loop under Caregiver Resources - a section that did not previously exist. In this section everything I

“ This opportunity was a blessing in disguise in order start a conversation about caregiver needs with service providers. ”



Banu Sundaralingam (above) presents her final project at Toronto Rehab Institute

developed can be found in addition to online resources that I felt could be helpful to a clinicians' practice.

There is also a section now under the page "Adult Rehab Outcome Measures," titled "Caregiver Outcome Measures," which lists caregiver outcome measures that SPs can use in their practice to assess caregiver needs. This topic was also discussed in the Caregiver Education Sessions I provided to clinicians.

Overall, through this project there was increased awareness about addressing caregiver needs in the community for VHA Central team. There are also increased caregiver related resources and a more streamlined manner of accessing resources. The post survey results of this project indicated that there was an overall increase in SP's confidence in addressing caregiver needs in the community, ~12%. However, this project emphasized an increased need for more education sessions and resources for caregivers; there is so much more to learn and offer to caregivers and offer to clinicians to increase their confidence in addressing caregiving needs.

The Development The fellowship was an extremely rewarding experience and most definitely the highlight of my career. It was my first time taking a lead on a project, and I learned a whole new set of skills outside of being a clinician. The fellowship challenged me to go outside of my comfort zone for this project to succeed. But with these challenges I grew a lot more as an individual, more confident in my leadership, project management skills, creativity skills and especially my oral presentation skills. I am now able to attend to projects with a higher level of critical thinking skills. I have also fostered stronger communication skills to effectively communicate with my team members to ensure the success of a project. A few months after the fellowship I started a new role at VHA. I currently am a Professional Practice Specialist and Educator for Rehab at VHA. I now work for the Best Practice Research and Education

(BPRE) team full time. In this role I collaborate with the iQ-BPRE team, clinical leads, service providers, client partners and vendors to design and facilitate the delivery of orientation and training programs for rehab providers and personal support staff that promotes community best practices and client-centered care. I also organize internal and external education sessions and lead some education sessions. I am also responsible for reviewing best practice guidelines, documentation standards and ensuring that clinicians are working according to best practices. The fellowship has truly helped me be successful in this role, and it has given me the skills and confidence to be able to fulfill the duties of this role.

The Client Engagement Connecting with caregivers was an extremely valuable aspect of this project. I interviewed three caregivers who are client partners at VHA. I had one-on-one conversations with the caregivers, and they gave deep, meaningful insight on their role in their loved one's care. Their stories were truly powerful and heart-warming and gave more reason for the need for a project related to addressing caregiver needs. Their testimonies were used for presentations to the fellowship committee and VHA teams, in order to emphasize the need to address caregiver needs in the community. I consulted with the caregivers as well on what Service Providers can do for them to better address caregiver needs in the community. The caregivers' feedback was also used to inform the interventions of the project.

The Advice One piece of advice that I received from one of the past fellows, when I was thinking about applying for this fellowship, is to choose a project that you are truly passionate about. Choosing a topic that you are passionate about will

“Connecting with caregivers was an extremely valuable aspect of this project.”

make the whole fellowship experience more fun and it won't seem like actual work! Own your project and have fun! This is one of the most unique experiences you will encounter in your career. This is a wonderful opportunity to lead a project that you are truly interested in and more importantly, it is a wonderful opportunity for you to make a valuable change in your company. Your project can highlight some of the gaps at VHA and support valuable change at VHA. ■

Learn more about Banu's project and how you can apply for a fellowship with VHA Research here:

<https://www.vha.ca/research/research-fellowship-program/>



SPOT IT. PREVENT IT!

Creating a positive safety culture at VHA Home HealthCare

WRITTEN BY Michelle Holden, Lead, Communications & Marketing, HIROC

For Personal Support Workers (PSWs) caring for clients in the home, the work can at times be isolating. Delivering care within the four walls of clients' homes can leave providers vulnerable in a number of ways – one of those ways is provider abuse.

In recent years, cases of abuse towards home care providers have been on the rise; and not all incidents are reported. The team at VHA Home HealthCare recognized their responsibility to step in and promote a safe work environment. “You need to build trust and say, ‘It’s okay. It happened. And, we know it’s not your fault,’” said Sandra McKay, Director of Research at VHA Home HealthCare.

This became the focus of VHA's Spot it. Prevent it! awareness campaign, part of a larger project which received a 2018/19 HIROC Safety Grant.

PROVIDER ABUSE

McKay says abuse tends to stem from the number of individuals in home care with behavior issues related to cognitive impairments, known as responsive behaviours. The project was launched to reduce incidents of workplace violence in the home. It also aimed to decrease the perception of risk that comes with caring for clients with cognitive impairments who may exhibit responsive behaviours.

Responsive behaviours, such as hitting, cursing, and biting, are some of the challenges PSWs may experience in the home. These behaviours are often a response to something in the personal, social or physical environment of a client with dementia, mental health, substance use and/or other neurological disorders.

McKay and her team also understand that VHA's PSW workforce is largely made up of racialized minorities. “We know from the literature that vulnerable minorities are reluctant to speak up ■

when they believe there may be an impact to their employment, to their status within the organization, and if it's unclear what will happen.”

THE SPOT IT. PREVENT IT! CAMPAIGN

VHA's project was split into two parts, targeting PSWs and their supervisors. It integrated education on best practices and de-escalation strategies for mitigating risk. And for incidents that do take place, it provided tactics such as a rapid-response algorithm to visualize the reporting process, videos, posters, policy updates, ethics education sessions, and integration into new-hire orientation sessions.

The campaign by McKay and the team communicated the message that when PSWs and supervisors report an incident, these are the steps that you can expect the organization to take – it was about clarity. That clarity provides a level of comfort to people and it allows them to make decisions based on the available information.”

VHA monitored the campaign through a survey to providers and supervisors. They saw an overwhelming response rate – an indication to the research team that they were speaking about something that is really important to PSWs. We developed a much closer relationship with the teams,” said McKay, who expressed the importance of creating a positive safety culture.

VHA also received buy-in from supervisors, who met once a month with the research team to provide an update on individual cases that had occurred and where they had used the algorithm to support staff. McKay emphasized the fact that the project wasn't inspired or developed in a vacuum. A great deal of support came from VHA's work with client partners – clients and their caregivers who work with VHA on a variety of initiatives and have first-hand experience with home care.

For McKay and her team, the campaign's message of trust and open communication was incredibly powerful and is something that carries through into their work today. The impact it has had on VHA's culture is a reminder for everyone involved of the responsibility to speak up and put safety first. |

2020 Junior Researcher Development Award Winner



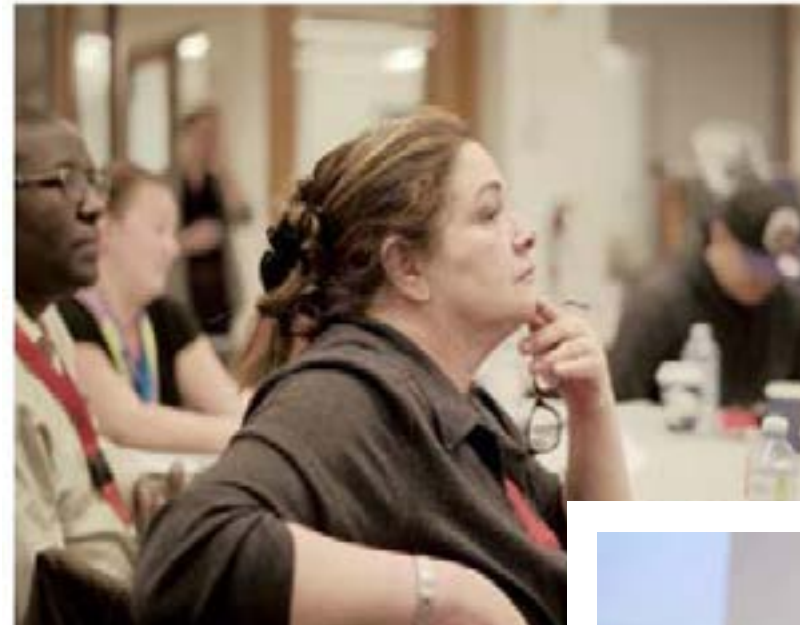
This award was developed to offer mentorship and funding opportunities for promising young researchers who have a keen interest in studying and advancing evidence in the home care sector! We are pleased to announce that we have awarded one great researcher - **Marianne Saragosa**

Marianne is a PhD candidate at the Institute for Health Policy, Management and Evaluation at the University of Toronto. Previous clinical experience as an RN in geriatrics has informed Marianne's interest in care transitions and patient and caregiver engagement. Her research will examine the experiences of the patient-caregiver dyad for persons with dementia who have experienced a recent care transition from hospital to home. This grounded theory study will inform future practice innovations that best support older adults' transitioning across the continuum of care.

Being discharged from hospital and returning home for people living with dementia and their caregivers can be a challenging time.

Marianne's study will examine barriers and identify facilitators to quality hospital-to-home care transitions which aligns well with VHA Research's area of focus: a more Connected System.

Congratulations, Marianne!



CREATING THE SENIOR FRIENDLY SEVEN

As our population ages, a “senior friendly” movement has emerged in health care that recognizes the special health circumstances of a growing number of frail seniors.

WRITTEN BY **Jo-Anne Liburd**



VHA PSW Patricia Jaegar (L) Supervisor Stacie-Ann London (R) engage in SF7 workshops

Senior-friendly care facilities were the first to emerge, but since many seniors live and receive their care in the home, providing a coordinated and consistent care response across the health spectrum means extending senior-friendly principles into home care.

In 2016, the Regional Geriatric Program of Toronto (RGP) launched an initiative to equip home health care providers with the skills to recognize and respond appropriately to senior frailty. With a grant from the Retired Teachers of Ontario Foundation, RGP partnered with VHA Home HealthCare and multiple community partners to develop the Senior Friendly Care Framework—a blueprint of guiding principles and defining statements for what senior-friendly care should look like across our health care system in order to achieve the best possible health outcomes for older adults.

EMPOWERING HOME CARE WORKERS

To put the framework into action in the home, the RGP engaged personal support workers and their coordinators to co-develop a senior-friendly toolkit for home care workers to use. “The goal was to understand the realities of home care and provide personal support workers with tips, strategies and materials that reflect those realities,” says Dr. Kathryn Nichol, Vice President Quality, Best Practice, Research and Education & Chief Nursing Executive at VHA. PSWs work with seniors everyday and they plan an important role in keeping them safe. Each toolkit alerts PSWs to key things they should be aware of and thinking about during their care- in a format that is genuinely helpful to the PSW because PSWs had a hand in creating it.

A TOOL FOR EVERY SITUATION

Stacie-Ann London, a PSW Care Team Supervisor at VHA, has been using the toolkit with her team. “As team leader, my main focus is staff engagement because [my team members] work autonomously,” she says. “I have started using information from the toolkit in my weekly message to them, so on a regular basis they get information about delirium or mobility or pain. I also have a monthly meeting with my team and have started to incorporate the ‘SF7’ at those as well.”

The toolkit has been well received by front-line care providers also. “A lot of times you can miss the little things,” says Nancy, a PSW. “The toolkit talks about things like facial cues, for example, so even though clients may hide some of problems, you know to be looking out for things and can find the underlying reasons and discuss it.” Kathryn notes that pursuing innovative partnerships like this, which support VHA’s care providers to deliver spectacular care and support client independence, is a hallmark of VHA’s service approach. “VHA has always sought improved ways to support the needs of our clients and their families, and we look to the wisdom of our teams for ideas. Having the opportunity to co-create evidence-informed, practical tools with our partners has a trickle-down effect. It empowers our staff to be part of Ontario’s health system transformation, enhances the care they provide and leads to better outcomes for our clients.” ■

To learn more about the Senior Friendly Seven toolkit, please watch the video at:
https://youtu.be/_jKNuPzHAEg

Inside the Toolkit

While the Sf7 Toolkit isn’t meant to replace the advice of qualified healthcare providers, it does provide a framework for assessment, prevention and treatment strategies.

Delirium: This is an acute disturbance in mental abilities resulting in confusion and a risk factor for several negative outcomes, including falls, escalating severity of disease symptoms and cognitive impairment. Delirium is preventable but often goes undetected.

Mobility: Being able to get around and do things when you’re older is important for function and for independence. Even small amounts of activity can make a difference. Building movement into daily activities is one simple strategy.

Nutrition: Research shows that nutritional risk increases with age, and missing important nutrients can severely affect mood, muscles and bones, the heart, immunity and gastrointestinal health. Malnutrition is preventable.

Pain: Common in older adults, pain is under-reported. Two in five older Canadians experience chronic pain, and it’s one of the most frequent causes of emergency department visits. Pain can be managed with medication as well as non-pharmacological approaches such as meditation and body therapies.

Polypharmacy: Multiple medications may be appropriate for a patient, but it’s important to identify when medications are inappropriate and may put the patient at an increased risk of adverse reactions. Research shows that 66 per cent of older adults takes five or more medications, which increases risk.

Continence: The prevalence of urinary incontinence increases with age, and it can have enormous impact on quality of life. The good news is that it can be treated and managed.

Social engagement: Loneliness and social isolation have a direct and sometimes severe impact on physical and mental health. Research has shown that one in five Canadians, mainly older adults, experience some degree of loneliness.

As seen in Renaissance Magazine Summer 2019 issue

ABOUT VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

Founded in 1925 as the Visiting Homemakers Association, VHA Home HealthCare (VHA) is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that offers 24/7 health care and support services to people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. Our goal is to provide clients with spectacular service when, where and how they want it to support their independence. Our caring team of professionals includes nurses, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, personal support workers, home support workers, cleaners, social workers, dietitians, and speech-language pathologists. We deliver the highest quality client support at home, in the community and in long-term care facilities.

VISION, MISSION & BELIEFS

Vision: High quality care delivered with great heart - for every person, every time, everywhere

Mission: Creating possibilities for more independence, championing the needs of our clients and families and delivering high quality, integrated care

Core Beliefs: Our care must be:

Client-driven because what matters most to clients and families is what counts

Spectacular and continuously focused on quality improvement and safety

Integrated and collaborative to unearth innovative answers to complex challenges

Inclusive and committed to serving the most vulnerable in our communities

Inspired and creative, delivered by a skilled team that has tremendous heart

As a charitable not-for-profit organization led by a volunteer Board of Directors, VHA is committed to:

- Valuing and supporting our staff and care providers
- Fiscal responsibility
- Driving positive change in community support and home health care
- Ethical practices in all our operations

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20