



**Greetings  
from Canada !!!**

# The Links Between the Mechanisms Used to Keep Oldest-Old (85+) Seniors at Home and Myths of Aging

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# Today's Plan

1. Present a little about the project
2. Using the mechanisms seniors and their caregivers created, we can help to dispell prevailing myths on aging:
  - a) what seniors taught us about the mechanisms they use to stay at home
  - b) how this info dispells a prevailing myth(s)
  - c) links to elder mediation

# **Original Research Question**

**What mechanisms keep  
oldest-old seniors living  
in their own homes and their  
communities?**



# **Background Literature**

# Background Literature

- **Branch (2001)**

- For every 1 senior living in a facility, 2 to 3 live in the community
- “What works/doesn’t work” for comm. dwellers?

- **Kitchener, Hernandez, Ng, and Harrington (2006)**

- Some seniors would rather have their houses falling down around them than move

# Background Literature

- **Gonyea (2005)**

- the myths about oldest-old & housing

- presume one-way trajectory to living in facilities

# **Our Perspective**

**Seniors should be treated with respect and dignity, and as viable and productive members of their communities.**

The background features a vertical gradient from light purple at the top to light yellow at the bottom. Overlaid on this are several stylized, semi-transparent leaves in shades of yellow and light purple. The leaves have a simple, graphic design with visible veins. The word "Methods" is centered in a bold, dark purple serif font.

# Methods

# Methodology

- 16 semi-independent oldest-old seniors (85+) & their caregivers
- Semi-structured interviews
- Southwestern Ontario region
- Qualitative, grounded theory
- Coded for themes using NVivo 7

# Two Key Questions about Keeping Seniors at Home: Social Inclusion

What does it mean to you to be living in your own home?

What do you do to keep \_\_\_\_\_ living at home? (mechanisms)



# **Findings and Discussion**

# What Seniors Taught Us about “Home”

- home means “everything”
- they do need their homes
- symbol of their independence
- “it’s my home”

## Quote about Staying Home

“I’ll do anything to stay in my own home. I’d much rather be on my own with my cat, my television.

I hope I can stay at home.”

# The Myth

- We think that seniors do not think about their “homes” in the same way that the rest of us do.
  - use of the house
  - anticipation of the future

# Message to Elder Mediators

- Probe for interests concerning the value embedded in the meaning of one's home.
- There may be many layers to how much seniors value their homes.
- If seniors give up their homes, they give up "everything," which means we need to be sensitive about their losses.

# What Seniors Taught Us about Mechanisms

- 9 themes of main mechanisms seniors and their caregivers use to keep the seniors at home
- Today we focus on SADLs and IADLs

# Comparing Activities of Daily Living: ADLs, IADLs

Activities of Daily Living	Instrumental Activities of Daily Living	
Eating Toileting Getting dressed Personal care	Shopping Cooking Cleaning Getting to doctor Paying bills Banking	

# Comparing ADLs, IADLs, SADLs

Activities of Daily Living	Instrumental Activities of Daily Living	Social Activities of Daily Living
Eating Toileting Getting dressed Personal care	Shopping Cooking Cleaning Getting to doctor Paying bills Banking	Family/friends Networking Neighbours Church Group exercise <i>Seniors' groups</i>

# SADLs: A Definition from Seniors

- SADLs

- humans are inherently social beings who need social interaction everyday

- central activities in the lives of individuals to get them through the day

# SADLs: A Definition from Seniors

- these are the activities SENIORS, not caregivers, are doing themselves to get social interaction
- when carried out, they also keep seniors active → at home → living in their communities

# Three Sub-themes of SADLs

1. The value and meaning of SADLs
2. Getting out, getting exercise, being social
3. Deliberate checking-in

# 1. The Value of Social Activities

- SADLs provide individuals with
  - a sense of belonging
  - purpose, meaning and enjoyment in life
  - a good quality of life and well-being
  - a way to share information

# 1. The Value of Social Activities

- a way to share information (cont'd)
  - government programs and services
  - health care providers
  - paid help with house/yard work
  - bargains and money-saving information, and
  - many other resources

## 2. Getting Out, Getting Exercise, Being Social

- Social activities as:
  - a) Physical exercise
    - attending exercise class
    - walking for pleasure
    - walking for groceries
    - walking for other shopping
    - swimming

## **2. Getting Out, Getting Exercise, Being Social**

### **b) Mental exercise**

- lectures
- concerts
- learning computers
- current events discussions
- playing cards

## 3. Deliberate Checking-in

- Seniors 85+ involved in two types:
  - Informal
    - reciprocal
    - family members/friends
    - rotating among different members
    - scheduled or unscheduled
    - mail/newspaper system

# The Myth

- Health-related changes will require seniors to need assistance with everything in their lives.

# A Main Message for Elder Mediators about SADLs

- These oldest-old seniors are not passively waiting for others to entertain them or create social events in which they can participate.
- See seniors as social beings who are complex, with abilities and limitations.
- Seniors have social resources, as well as physical ones.
- Help other family members to see these!!

# **What Seniors and Caregivers Taught Us about IADLs**

**These seniors had  
functional/health changes  
and took part in IADLs !!!**

# IADLs In Which Seniors Took Part with Caregivers

- Cleaning: sitting, intermittent
- Cooking: sitting, caterers, own cooking, family
- Groceries: ReMark, frozen, other family

# IADLs In Which Seniors Took Part with Caregivers

- Transportation: own car, others, taxis, city bus, shared car
- Laundry: multi-person system, own

# SADLs and IADLs Dispell The Trilogy of Myths

- Seniors will experience functional decline and will experience decreased health.
- As a result, they will require seniors to need assistance with everything in their lives.

# The Trilogy of Myths

- As a result, seniors will move from their houses to apartments to a facility.

# Dispelling The Trilogy of Myths

- If seniors do experience functional or health declines, these 85+ individuals reveal the need for **SOME** assistance with **SOME** things in their lives.
- Seniors and caregivers figured it out **TOGETHER !!!!**

# Message to Elder Mediators

- Know what is possible.
- In the case of burden, we can know we could help to move caregivers and seniors toward realization that seniors and caregivers can share in the tasks.
- These seniors were doing well.

# Message to Elder Mediators

- We believe most seniors can do well.
- We need to look for the signs that they can do some things well.
- Families need **CREATIVITY**, **INGENUITY**, and **WILLINGNESS** to be flexible to find out what seniors and caregivers can do.

# The Message to Elder Mediators

- Seniors may experience functional decline and may experience decreased health
- But, they do not need assistance with everything in their lives with these changes.
- The changes can be managed and worked out.

# Conclusions

- Overall, our findings about the mechanisms that these seniors and their caregivers use to keep oldest-old seniors living at home, dispel myths about aging and promote the social inclusion of seniors in their own care.

## **Conclusions**

**You will be subjected to the tension created between societal norms that dictate that seniors and their families should live by the myths and the need to defy these myths.**

# Limitations

- Several limitations to this study:
  - no community-level determinants
  - findings are non-generalizable (non-random)
  - an urban sample
  - regional culture
  - only pertains to seniors with informal care providers

# Questions?

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