

## CONVERSATIONS ON SUPPORTING FAMILY CAREGIVERS WITHIN ACUTE AND CONTINUING CARE SYSTEMS

### Presentation Type: Poster

#### Authors:

Jasneet Parmar, MBBS; Division of Care of the Elderly, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta  
Jacqueline Torti, PhD; Division of Care of the Elderly, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta  
Suzette Brémault-Phillips, PhD; Department of Occupational Therapy, University of Alberta  
Lesley Charles, MBChB; Division of Care of the Elderly, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta  
Karenn Chan, MD; Division of Care of the Elderly, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta  
Peter Tian, MD, MPH; Division of Care of the Elderly, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta  
Elaine Hoogewoonink, BA; Network of Excellence in Seniors' Health and Wellness, Covenant Health

**Background:** Covenant's Network of Excellence in Seniors' Health and Wellness (The Network) strives to enable seniors to live to the fullness of their capacity as active and connected member of communities.

Family caregivers are defined as individuals who provide ongoing care and assistance, without pay, for family members and friends in need of support due to physical, cognitive or mental health conditions. They are integral to the healthcare system and vital to its sustainability (in 2009, they contributed \$25 billion in unpaid work). Caregiving is being provided at significant physical, emotional and financial costs to family caregivers and there is a great need for recognition and understanding by healthcare providers, and of supports to help them manage their caregiver role and to care for themselves.

**Purpose:** A one day symposium aimed to make a difference in the lives of family caregivers by:

1. Raising awareness of the role of family caregivers, their challenges and need for supports.
2. Identifying gaps in family caregiver supports and sharing best practices.
3. Examining ways to enhance healthcare provider education to better support family caregivers.
4. Reviewing caregiver assessment tools for consideration in practice.

**Methods:** The Covenant Health Network of Excellence for Seniors' Health and Wellness hosted a symposium on Supporting Family Caregivers of Seniors within Acute and Continuing Care Systems. The symposium engaged participants in conversations on how best to involve and support family caregivers in the healthcare system and influence policies and practice. A secondary analysis was performed to identify key themes.

**Results:** Secondary analysis of the symposium's proceedings identified several key themes emerged around supporting caregivers: awareness, accessibility, consistency, comprehensiveness, time constraints, communication, integration and approach.

**Conclusions:** Family caregivers are integral in seniors' care and we need to review and strengthen current supports and services to support their needs.

**Next steps:** Disseminate findings, identify specific programs, policies and practices that better support family caregivers and advocate for change.