

## **Supporting Family Caregivers of Seniors: Improving Care and Caregiver Outcomes**

Jasneet Parmar, MBBS<sup>1,2</sup>; Suzette Brémault-Phillips, PhD<sup>3</sup>; Lesley Charles, MBChB, CCFP<sup>1</sup>; Peter George Tian, MD, MPH<sup>1</sup>; Melissa Johnson, MSc<sup>2</sup>  
Division of Care of the Elderly, Department of Family Medicine, University of Alberta; Network for Seniors' Health and Wellness, Covenant Health;  
<sup>3</sup>Department of Occupational Therapy, University of Alberta

**Context.** In Canada, about 3.8 million family caregivers care for seniors at an estimated cost of \$25 billion! Such caregiving often comes at great personal and financial cost to the caregiver. Moreover, time pressures, financial concerns and childcare issues can overwhelm caregivers, as can deterioration of the caregiver's health, social isolation, and lost income. Caregivers, thus, require support from the health, social, financial and legal systems to ensure that they can continue to provide care, while maintaining their own wellbeing. There is a gap, however, between what the evidence shows is beneficial to caregivers and what is actually provided. A better understanding of family caregiver expectations and ways to foster caregiver resilience and strength is critical.

**Objective:** To determine the strengths, gaps and barriers to the provision of caregiver supports, and to determine research priorities.

**Methodology:** We brought together 120 caregivers, healthcare providers and researchers to a CIHR-funded conference in Edmonton (April 14-15, 2014). We discussed ways to understand and support family caregivers of seniors and improve care and caregiver outcomes. The first day included presentations by national and international experts, and a modified world café. The second day focused on developing research plans.

**Results:** Broad partnerships were formed in 3 research areas: Palliative Care, Online Resources, and Seniors with Complex Needs. Researchers from the World Health Organization (WHO) and University of Calgary discussed studying caregiver support through use of the Internet. Researchers from the Palliative Institute (Edmonton) and McGill University prioritized studies supporting caregivers in palliative care. And researchers from Covenant Health, Alberta Health Services, University of Alberta and Alzheimer Society focused on caregiver support for seniors with complex needs. Research plans were developed, aimed at examining the effectiveness of supports for caregivers in the 3 research areas.

**Conclusion:** After discussing the current state of the research, barriers, gaps, and facilitators on day 1, discussions on day 2 were able to revolve around identification of research priorities. Our next steps will be Knowledge Exchange activities, formulation of specific teams, and preparation of grant proposals.