Menec is helping to create communities that make it easier for seniors to stay active and healthy as they age. A lot of factors can play a role: Is it easy for them to get around by foot in their neighbourhood? Are they concerned about crime? Are they struggling financially? Do they have resources in their apartment complex?

Driven to find out what the real issues and challenges are for older adults, Menec equipped seniors with cameras and had them take pictures of age-friendly features and barriers in their community. She conducted surveys, focus groups, and cross-referenced that data with computerized health records to identify links. She also asked some individuals to wear pedometers to measure their activity level.

Her research to date has provided a better understanding of the factors that contribute to healthy aging. The next phase, currently underway, is to help communities become more age-friendly. Her research is done in partnership with various organizations to increase the likelihood that it will influence policy, programs and services. It’s a pressing issue, given Canada’s population of seniors is expected to grow to 19 per cent by 2021 and put a strain on the healthcare system.

Menec was awarded her Tier 2 Chair in 2005; it was renewed in 2010. She has helped position the University of Manitoba as a leader in the field of aging in Canada.

Menec received all three of her degrees here, including her PhD in Social Psychology in 1995. She remained at the university as an instructor and postdoctoral fellow until leaving a year later to do a fellowship at the University of California. In 1998 she returned to take a post as Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences. She later became the Acting Director (Research) of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and the Director of the Centre on Aging.