

AGEISM IN MANITOBA WORKSHOP SUMMARY



JANUARY 23, 2019



**UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA**

Centre on Aging

The Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba, was established on July 1, 1982, with a mandate to serve as a focal point for the conduct of research on aging.

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SUMMARY

As part of the Centre on Aging's outreach to bring awareness of issues faced by older people in the Province, the Centre hosted a half day workshop on January 23, 2019 that focused on ageism in Manitoba.

Over 70 participants took part in this event where ageist stereotypes in society were examined, and participants were asked to reflect on their own internal ageist ideas. A short presentation given by Centre Director Dr. Michelle Porter, outlined the existing definitions in the academic literature and from international organizations (e.g., World Health Organization) on ageism, discussed the effects, and looked at ways to reduce ageism in society.

Several group and individual activities required participants to think of and identify

- examples of ageism;
- what actions can be taken; and
- discuss what specific types of strategies or activities/programs could be studied in Manitoba.

This document provides a brief synopsis of the individual and group activity reporting.

EXAMPLES OF AGEISM

Focused on ageism related to older people, although other forms of ageism also exist

Examples of Negative Ageism

- Patronizing acts or attitudes of those who are younger (older women and cars, giving up seat on bus, using endearing terms such as 'dear' and 'sweetie')
- Sexual activity and age
- Differences in how medical conditions are treated, solely based on age
- Media and greeting card stereotypical portrayals of younger and older people, as well as aging (e.g., anti-wrinkle creams)
- "You look good for your age"
- Acting as if an older person is not there and making decisions without consulting them
- Assumptions about abilities solely based on age (e.g., driving, technology, physical tasks, being employed, etc.)
- Lack of participation in some activities because they are for "old people"
- Individuals limiting themselves because "they are too old"
- Restricting access to programs and services based on age

Examples of Positive Ageism

- Discounts for seniors at stores or restaurants
- Assuming older people have a good work ethic because of their generation
- Federal income support programs ("Old Age Security")

INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS TO REDUCE AGEISM

- Personal improvement (e.g., exercising, piano lessons)
- Challenge ageist attitudes and language of self and others
- Educate others
- Use new terminology with others
- Healthy programming for others
- Stop self-ageism
- Review organization information (print, social media, etc)
- Don't judge others by their initial appearance
- Vote for anti-ageist candidates
- Understand implicit bias

ACTIONS OF GROUPS OR ORGANIZATIONS TO REDUCE AGEISM

- Have older persons going to schools to talk not just read
- Start a movement similar to #MeToo for Older Persons using social media to provide messages on anti-aging
- Petition governments to end ageist policies (e.g., government of Ontario mandatory driving program for older drivers)
- Pursue discussions about aging
- Influence older voters
- Introduce ageism to Seniors Centres so they can advocate for better policies and laws against ageism
- Hold community meeting/workshop on reframing aging
- Educate people about ways to reduce ageism
- When programming, will choose activities that do not perpetuate stereotypes about aging (will seek suggestions instead)

WHAT COULD WE STUDY IN MANITOBA?

- Various forms of communication or education related strategies were suggested (e.g., TV show, radio shows, social media, children's books, conference for elementary and/or high school students, healthcare)
- Ageism in health care (e.g., under-diagnosing, over-prescribing)
- Intergenerational activities (e.g., housing – students living with an older person)
- Cross-cultural study on perceptions of aging
- Audit of Manitoba laws as they relate to ageism, and compare to best practices in other provinces/federal government

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