

Centre on Aging Centre on Aging news

Spring 2021, Volume 39, Issue 1
ISSN 2370-3849

This issue

Imagining life, post pandemic: 38th Annual Spring Research Symposium is going virtual.....	1
COVID-19 resources	3
Centre on Aging updates	5
Reflections on COVID-19's effects on older people	6
STAR updates.....	7
Centre on Aging student awards due May 21	7
Virtual recreation during a pandemic and beyond	8
Research updates: How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting older people?	9
And now, for something completely different	14

Centre on Aging

The Centre on Aging, established on July 1, 1982, is a university-wide research centre with a mandate to conduct, encourage, integrate, and disseminate research on all aspects of aging.

Director: Dr. Michelle Porter

Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management

The Centre on Aging News is published once a year, and is available on our web site and by request. Direct comments and inquiries to

Phone: 204.474.8754
Email: coaman@umanitoba.ca
Web: umanitoba.ca/aging
Social media



/CentreOnAging.umanitoba



@um_coaging

Newsletter editor: Rachel Ines
*all articles were written and compiled by the
Newsletter editor except where identified

Imagining life, post pandemic: 38th Annual Spring Research Symposium is going virtual



Photo credit: Centre for Ageing Better, Peter Kindersley

The Centre on Aging is once again hosting their Spring Research Symposium online. Join us May 3–4 to hear a diverse group of presenters as we contemplate life post pandemic. This year's theme is *Looking forward to aging in a post-pandemic world*.

Without doubt, we are living through some challenging times. The pandemic has forced us to change our daily lives and habits, while adapting to constantly changing measures to ensure we protect one another, and population groups who are at higher risk of contracting the coronavirus. Yet, as we make these changes, are we as a society taking stock of how these changes are affecting others—particularly older people in the community and personal care homes?

Imagining life, post pandemic continued on page 2 ...

This year's Symposium will focus on lessons learned while moving forward. Once Manitobans have received their vaccinations, how can we ensure that the mistakes made during the pandemic do not happen again? How do we provide the services and supports to help older people recover from the pandemic? Our presenters this year will discuss how we move forward to better the lives of older people.

Symposium schedule

The Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba will be hosting their annual Symposium over two days:

- May 3: Presentations 9 am–12 pm; Poster session 1–4 pm
- May 4: Poster session 9 am–12 pm; Presentations 1–4 pm

There is no cost to attend the 38th Annual Spring Research Symposium. Everyone is welcome to join us online—whether you're a student, researcher, staff at a senior serving organization, or an interested community member, join us virtually.

For all Spring Research Symposium updates and to view the program schedule, visit our Web page: umanitoba.ca/centre-on-aging/research/spring-symposium.

Information for attendees

Each day, a different set of presenters will present on their topic. We have scheduled sessions to be alternately streamed in the morning and afternoon, and are only available on their scheduled day.

Separate links will be provided for each day of presentations, which will be pre-recorded and streamed online. A live moderated question and answer session will take place immediately following the conclusion of each presentation.

In addition to these sessions, 20 students and researchers will present their research through audio narrated poster presentations. We encourage Symposium attendees to take part in the poster sessions and support our researchers.

Our health breaks will also feature short exercise breaks led by UM Recreation Services staff, for those interested.

How to register for the Spring Research Symposium

To attend the 38th Spring Research Symposium, **no formal registration is required**—one click and you can join us online via sessions streamed on YouTube. A different viewing link will be provided for each day, closer to the Symposium date. Check the Web site for the link, or join our email list to be informed: coaman@umanitoba.ca.

While registration is not required, there are two ways for Symposium attendees to connect with our session presenters:

1. View the streamed session on YouTube.
2. Register on Eventbrite to view the sessions and connect with the presenters for the question and answer session via Zoom chat.

NOTE: Since the Zoom meeting information will be provided closer to the session, registrations will close the day before the scheduled presentations.

If you decided that you don't want to participate in the Zoom chat and later change your mind, register on Eventbrite. The registration for the Zoom chat will close the day before each session, e.g., May 3 Symposium registrations will close on May 2; May 4 Symposium registrations will close on May 3.

Join the question and answer sessions

To allow virtual Symposium attendees to connect with our presenters, immediately following the conclusion of each presentation, time will be allotted for attendees to submit their questions via a modified chat in Zoom. **Pre-registration is required** for these sessions. Registrants will be given a separate link for each Symposium day to both stream the sessions and ask questions via Zoom. You do not need to switch platforms. Register via Zoom **only** if you want to participate in the chat. If you prefer to listen to questions, no registration is needed and you can stream sessions via YouTube.

Whether you choose to ask question in one session, or all six sessions, you will need to register on Eventbrite for one or both days of the Symposium.



Joining the Zoom chats

- If you want to participate in both days of the Symposium, register on Eventbrite for both days: [May 3](#) and [May 4](#).
- If you only want to participate in the Monday morning sessions, register on Eventbrite for [May 3](#).
- If you only want to participate in the Tuesday afternoon sessions, register on Eventbrite for [May 4](#).

Scheduled presentations | May 3

Our first day of presentations will feature our research affiliates and advisory board member as they discuss topics on mental health, pandemic lessons, and Indigenous contemplative and mindfulness practices.

Mental health in later life: Is it the best of times or the worst of times?

Corey S. Mackenzie, Ph.D., C. Psych.

Professor, Psychology and Psychiatry; Clinical Associate, Centre on Aging

This presentation will review two hypotheses about how mental health changes with age. The first is that aging is a difficult, sad process associated with many negative outcomes. The second is that aging is associated with positive changes that result in numerous mental health benefits. This presentation will review what a large and growing body of scientific evidence has to say about which of these hypotheses appears to be most accurate, and we will review several theoretical models that help us understand why mental health changes as we age. Finally, we will discuss how the information covered in this talk applies to ways in which people of different ages have been coping during the global pandemic.

Lessons from the pandemic—Older adults, their health and their health care

Cornelia (Kristel) van Ineveld, MD, MSc, FRCP(C)

Associate Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only directly impacted the health of those older adults infected with the virus, but also led to social isolation, loneliness, functional decline and the destabilization of chronic comorbidities for many. The heavy toll of the pandemic in long term care highlights the need to plan across the continuum of care. Lessons learned tell us that we must advocate for: the improved availability of technology; the vital role of essential caregivers and family; public health adapting their outreach to target at-risk populations; consistent rapid access to ambulatory care that is more tightly integrated with primary care.

Scheduled presentations continued on page 4 ...

COVID-19 resources

The Centre on Aging continues to share community resources and practical information for older persons in the community as it relates to COVID-19.

Information is regularly updated on our Web site, and shared through our biweekly updates and social media pages (Facebook and twitter). Resources are organized into five sections:

- Resources home (Groceries open and delivering)
- Health resources (listing of reputable sources of COVID-19 health information, mental health resources)
- Community resources (community supports for older people)
- Social resources (listing of various online physical activity Web sites, virtual tour offerings, at home concerts)
- Volunteer opportunities (organizations that support older people that need volunteers)

For full listings, visit our [Community and partners page](#).

The Mindful Elder: The healing power of Indigenous contemplative and mindfulness practices

Michael Yellow Bird, MSW, PhD
Dean and Professor, Faculty of Social Work

This presentation discusses the healing power of traditional Indigenous contemplative and mindfulness practices and the implications for building a community of Mindful, healthy, and resilient Indigenous Elders. Contemplative research and traditional knowledge have found that contemplative practices help to build cognitive resilience, cultivate compassion and tolerance, heal emotions, improve the brain, slow aging, and alleviate trauma. The talk will include a discussion of the effects that trauma has on the brain and body and how contemplative practices can restore health and well-being even down to the genetic and molecular levels.

May 4 presenters

Our second day of presentations will take place in the afternoon. Centre research affiliates will discuss issues relating to home care, social isolation, and health policy.

Life after COVID: Opportunities and challenges for home care

Christine Kelly, PhD
Associate Professor, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences, Community Health Sciences

During the pandemic, media coverage focuses on residential care facilities because of the alarmingly high rates of severe and deadly cases of COVID-19 and the social isolation that residents are experiencing. Yet, the vast majority of older people who need care receive it at home, and this group is also often at higher risk of contracting severe cases of the disease. This commentary draws on material found in the public domain to present some of the impacts of COVID-19 on home and community care services considering the perspectives of clients, unpaid caregivers, and paid care workers. The presentation considers the potential of carrying forward lessons learned as we enter the late stages of the pandemic.

Social isolation and loneliness: Can lessons learned during the pandemic help in the future?

Verena Menec, PhD
Professor, Department of Community Health Sciences, Max Rady College of Medicine

Decades' worth of research shows that social isolation and loneliness increase older adults' risk of physical and mental health problems. With the social distancing required during the COVID-19 pandemic, more people are experiencing social isolation and loneliness. This presentation will focus on how people and organizations have been affected by, and have adapted to the pandemic, and how the lessons learned might help in the future in reducing social isolation and loneliness, and associated health risks.

Lessons from the pandemic—Health policy

Phil St. John, MD, MPH, FRCPC
Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many policy issues relevant to the delivery of care to ageing populations. It has reinforced the importance of social connections, social engagement, and social supports. It has also put a spotlight on social determinants of health, and on longterm care. Ongoing attention to improve social situations and health care delivery will be needed to improve health and reduce health inequalities amongst older populations.

Connect with us and join our mailing list!

Every two weeks the Centre publishes an electronic newsletter delivered directly to your inbox.

Our biweekly updates provides information on the Centre's upcoming events. Additional information includes upcoming conferences, funding and job opportunities, aging related resources, and more. To sign up for our list, email coaman@umanitoba.ca to be added.



@CentreOnAging.umanitoba



@UM_coaging

Centre on Aging updates

Director news

Centre Director Dr. Michelle Porter has been interviewed by various local and national news outlets about various aging related issues on the COVID-19 pandemic.

Samson, S. (2021, April 13). COVID-19 hitting Manitoba seniors less hard since March 1, latest statistics suggest. *CBC News Manitoba*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/seniors-fewer-deaths-hospitalizations-covid-19-1.5986482?_vz=medium%3Dsharebar

Gerwing, M. (2021, March 26). Manitoba in race to vaccinate older population, 24K people 80 and older still need first dose. *CTV News Winnipeg*. <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/manitoba-in-race-to-vaccinate-older-population-24k-people-80-and-older-still-need-first-dose-1.5364574?fbclid=IwAR3NtkGkebOMSVMHs7zgTuDCQAN032NT4u-blMV7BN3s2jttKF6n0xsTEVc>

Da Silva, D. (2021, March 25). Mind the age gap: only 56 per cent of Manitobans 80-plus have had first vaccine dose. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/special/coronavirus/mind-the-age-gap-only-56-per-cent-of-manitobans-80-plus-have-had-first-vaccine-dose-574068492.html?fbclid=IwAR3_CWJHuHEKVaJRtR0HDKZXzl8F8djvDpcnFm2SFin9YMSp0Teh8cAENHA

Lam, P. (2021, March 25). Experts say transportation and technology barriers keeping some seniors from getting the shot. *CBC News Manitoba*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/seniors-aged-80-plus-vaccinations-55-per-cent-1.5964666?_vz=medium%3Dsharebar&fbclid=IwAR2vh-mR0Xzdw9tYuhlHrN8O77JIRAQhryw1feN5oVvHEltkKYWPNCNwCK4

Gowriluk, C. (2021, March 14). Daughter pulled mother from Winnipeg care home, but a year later a difficult decision looms. *CBC News Manitoba*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/pulling-family-from-personal-care-homes-covid19-manitoba-1.5948409>

Crabb, J. (2021, March 11). Deadly second wave of COVID-19 exposes cracks in Manitoba's long-term care system. *CTV News Winnipeg*. <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/deadly-second-wave-of-covid-19-exposes-cracks-in-manitoba-s-long-term-care-system-1.5344254>

Advisory board members

The Advisory Board serves as advisory to the Director on matters relating to policy for the Centre. Appointed to the board starting in Fall 2020 are

- Ms. Nicole Sawatzky, Community Representative, Pembina Community Resource Council; President, Manitoba Association of Senior Support Coordinators (ASSC)
- Dr. Alexandra Korall, Postdoctoral Fellow, George & Fay Yee Centre for Healthcare Innovation
- Ms. Courtney Addison, Graduate student, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
- Dr. Stephen Cornish, Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology & Recreation Management
- Dr. Celine Latulipe, Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Science
Re-appointed for a second term
- Dr. Mary Shariff, Associate Professor, Robson Hall, Faculty of Law

Reflections on COVID-19's effects on older people

Michelle Porter, Director, Centre on Aging

Life as we knew it has been impacted in so many ways over the past year. Last April when we were organizing our Spring Symposium virtually for the first time, we had hoped that we would meet in person this year, and we certainly never expected the fall that we experienced in Manitoba. For many of us in the academic field of gerontology, working with older people, living our lives as older people, or having older people in our lives, it has been traumatic and stressful. What we have seen played out in many countries, including Canada, and even in Manitoba, would have been hard to imagine in 2019.

Organizations all around the world are now calling for action in so many realms that affect older people, and there are lots of ways for you to get involved. Below, I am listing several initiatives that are seeking input/volunteers or require citizens to speak up and also ask for organizations to do what they can.

What you can do

Clearly long-term care requires major revisioning and an infusion of resources (financial and human). To provide input or to get involved, here is one place that is asking for volunteers and people to complete a brief survey: <https://longtermcarestandards.ca>

While the world was far from perfect and has a long way to go in terms of being age-friendly, it is rather ironic that the World Health Organization started the

Decade for Healthy Ageing in 2020. This initiative is supposed to encourage countries around the world to ensure that all people can age well with dignity. Globally there have been so many failures in this regard, whether it has been our healthcare systems rationing care based on age alone, the lack of resources to protect lives in long-term care, or in the ageist attitudes of huge swaths of society. Related to the latter issue of ageism, the World Health Organization has recently launched a [Global campaign to combat ageism](#). They are encouraging everyone to do what they can. A good place to start is reading their [report](#) and reviewing their [resources](#). “The WHO envisages that a diverse range of public and private sector actors will both contribute to and gain enormously from involvement in the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism”, and they want to hear from you about your [events](#) and [initiatives](#).

Another major initiative underway globally is the call to create a United Nations Convention on the Human Rights of Older Persons. If you want to learn more about this initiative you can watch and listen to a recent webinar here: [UN Live United Nations Web TV - The Impact of COVID 19 on the Human Rights of Older Persons: An International Perspective - OEWG11 Ageing Side Event](#). This webinar was hosted by the International Longevity Centre of Canada, and includes international aging experts and United Nations Ambassadors, including Canada's UN Ambassador Bob Rae.

To conclude this article, I would like to thank all those who continue to work hard across the province of Manitoba during the pandemic, as there are too many specific individuals or organizations to mention. Despite the challenges and truly horrendous scenarios that have played out, many have come together to protect lives, conduct research, deliver food or other necessities, reached out to those who were isolated, provided rides to appointments or tests, and stayed at home to stop the spread of the virus to those more vulnerable to its effects. Finally, I would like to thank **Rachel Ines** and **Nicole Dunn** for all their work at the Centre on Aging during these challenging times, as they help to keep the Centre going while we all work remotely.

New research affiliates

The Centre on Aging's mandate is to serve as a focal point for the conduct of research on aging. We welcome the following individuals who have been appointed as a research affiliate of the Centre since Fall 2020:

- Dr. Stephanie Chesser, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management
- Dr. Nicole Haverstock, Clinical Health Psychology, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences
- Dr. Gayle Halas, Max Rady College of Medicine, Rady Faculty of Health Sciences
- Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, Faculty of Social Work

STAR updates

Lisette Dansereau, STAR co-lead

Students Targeting Aging Research (STAR) is a student group at the University of Manitoba hosted by the Centre on Aging. Our goal is to allow students interested in aging-related topics to learn about current issues in gerontology while networking with each other, with people in the community, with researchers, and with practitioners.

The 2020–2021 term provided challenges to everyone, and STAR responded by pivoting to virtual meetings. Our topics over the term included researching in the context of COVID-19, careers in aging, new course offerings, and talks from research affiliates.

While connecting with each other, STAR members also reached out to the community through several outreach activities. Students contributed to several card drives by making Christmas and Valentine's cards for older people in the community and personal care homes, as well as supporting two older people through the Be a Santa to a Senior program.



Some of the Christmas cards made for residents and distributed to several Manitoba personal care homes by a STAR student.

Past and present student leads of STAR are currently conducting a study to evaluate student interest in joining our group, with findings to be used to enhance our programming. Depending on student interest, we will continue hosting monthly meetings through the 2021 spring and summer term.

If you would like more information or would like to join STAR, please email star@umanitoba.ca.

Centre on Aging student awards due May 21

The Centre on Aging has several funding opportunities that are meant to encourage the furthering of studies in aging and gerontology. The following awards are available for the 2021–2022 academic year:

- Barbara Jean Payne Memorial Award in Social Gerontology (\$1000)
- Centre on Aging Betty Havens Memorial Graduate Fellowship (\$4000)
- Jack MacDonell Scholarship for Research on Aging (\$4000)
- Esther and Samuel Milmot Scholarship (\$500)

In addition, the Centre on Aging adjudicates the Alzheimer Society Graduate Student Fellowships on behalf of the Alzheimer Society of Manitoba. Two fellowships valued at \$4000 each are available. Graduate students who intend to apply for both the Centre and Alzheimer awards must **complete TWO separate application forms**.

Interested applicants must submit the application form and all supporting documents on or before **May 21, 2021 by 4 pm** to Nicole Dunn. Late applications will not be accepted.

Application process update

For this year only, students are asked to submit an e-copy of transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended by May 21. Applicants can submit their transcripts to Nicole Dunn in any of the following ways:

1. Email transcripts directly from the academic institution.
2. Applicants can forward emailed transcripts from the academic institution.
3. Upload and then email hard copy transcripts.

Full details including application forms are available on the Web site: umanitoba.ca/centre-on-aging/student-opportunities/funding-and-awards.

Virtual recreation during a pandemic and beyond

Nicole Dunn, Centre on Aging

By Spring of 2020, Manitoba personal care homes (PCH) went into lockdown and visitors were no longer allowed inside the facilities. PCH recreation staff became responsible, in large part, for coordinating and conducting family visits. This was time consuming and it was difficult to assist every resident in connecting with their loved ones. While waiting to be assisted with visitation, residents had little to do. It became obvious that a new solution was required to engage residents, reduce social isolation, and improve quality of life.

Dr. Michelle Porter, Director, Centre on Aging, was successful in receiving funding from the New Horizons for Seniors Program of the federal government of Canada to support the idea of virtual recreation in personal care homes in Manitoba as one option for reducing social isolation for older people. Two students, **Liam O'Brien** and **Ravneet Brar**, were hired to assist with the project. Working with MACRHE and LTCAM, five PCHs volunteered to work on this project with us. The project team met several times with each PCH to determine their needs and obtain feedback as the project developed.



Student research assistants Liam O'Brien (left) and Ravneet Brar (right) assisted on the project.

The students conducted an environmental scan of virtual recreation opportunities locally, nationally, and internationally. Using this information, a newsletter was developed that included links to relevant events and topics. Initially, the newsletter

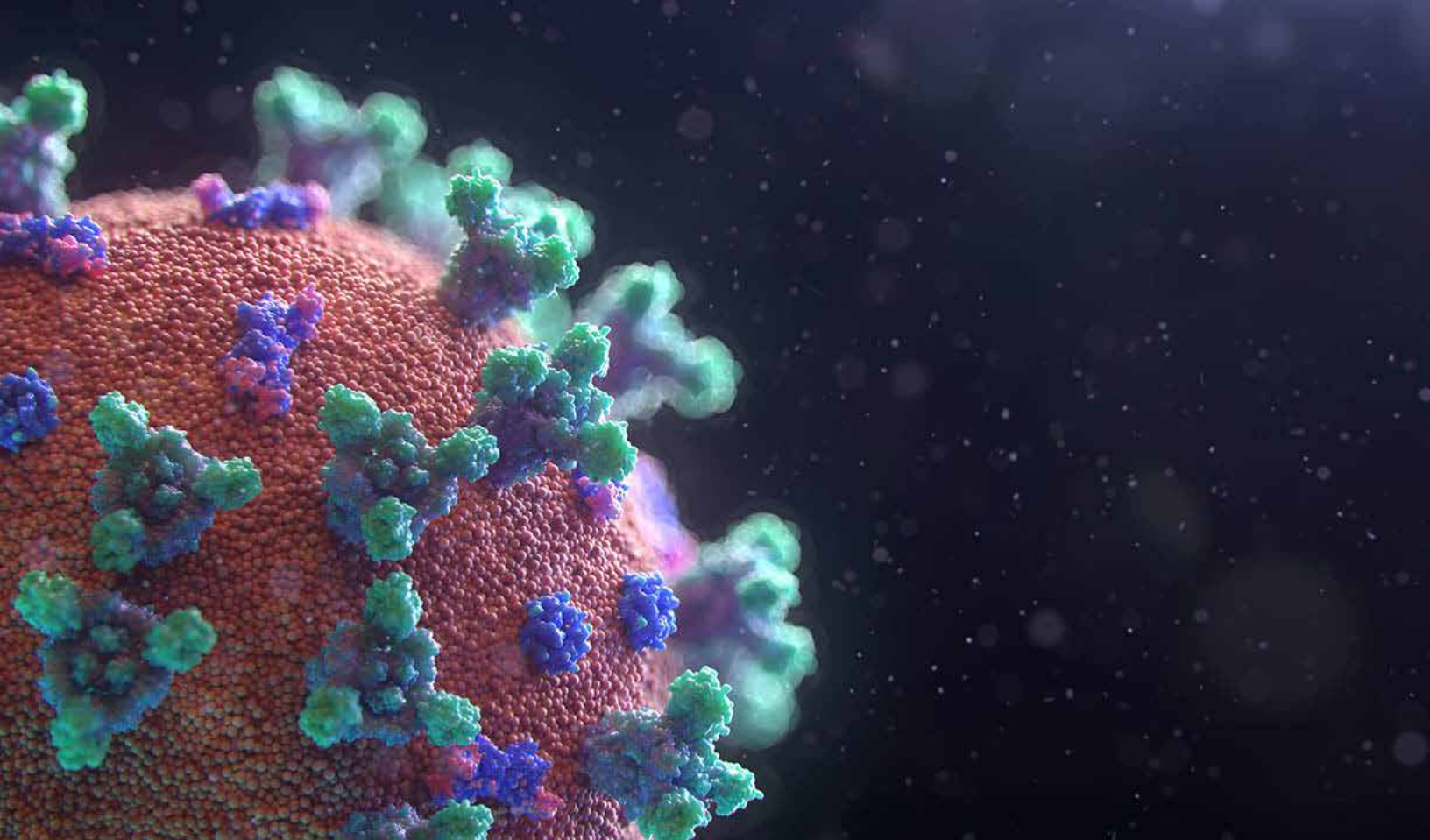
was distributed weekly, then bi-weekly, and finally for an entire month. Each newsletter included a calendar with different activities for each day of the month. It was quickly determined that videos on-demand were better suited for PCH rather than live events. The Wi-Fi in PCHs can be unstable and often does not reach all areas of the facility.

Also included in the newsletter were activity sheets that could be printed and distributed to residents. Paper provided some aspect of tactile stimulation, activities could be done independently, and could be disposed of easily thereby adhering to infection control protocols. Activity sheets included adult colouring pages, crosswords, word searches, short stories, dementiability activities, cultural programming, and/or miscellaneous puzzles and brainteasers.

A final aspect of the newsletter was a technology tip. Many recreation staff indicated they had limited knowledge of how some of the virtual visitation and other options were used. For example, recreation staff wanted assistance with how to use Zoom, FaceTime, Google Duo, What's App, Facebook Messenger, YouTube, etc. Each technology tip was broken down into step-by-step instructions with photos to make it as accessible as possible.

During the project, we learned that one facility had been using Google Nest Hubs. These are simple devices that are controlled with simple voice commands. They can be used to play music or radio stations from around the world, play videos or live webcams, tell jokes, give news and weather updates, and so much more. This gives residents autonomy and there is no need to touch the devices which assists with infection control. With multiple devices, they can be used to broadcast announcements such as meals or activities.

The project was able to purchase more than 200 hubs to more than 80 personal care homes and supportive housing facilities in Manitoba. This was aided by a generous donation from the Circle of Life Endowment Fund of the Winnipeg Foundation.



Research updates: How is the COVID-19 pandemic affecting older people?

When the COVID-19 pandemic was declared last spring, the disruption ceased all research activities at the University of Manitoba in response to stopping the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The pandemic has taken a hard toll on the global population, but its effects specifically on older populations cannot be ignored. If anything, the pandemic has shone a spotlight more brightly on the care and treatment of older people. For people working in aging related fields and supporting older people: researchers, senior serving organizations, caregivers, and families, these issues are not new. Yet for the world, it became an opportunity for a call to action to do better and find ways to improve the treatment and support of older people.

As a research centre, nearly 80 researchers from four universities across the province of Manitoba are affiliated with the Centre on Aging. Each researcher conducts aging related studies in their specific discipline.

While in person research stopped, a new opportunity emerged with calls from research agencies to study the COVID-19 pandemic from varying perspectives: biological, physical, social, and mental health, including a focus on COVID's effects on older populations. Many researchers responded to this opportunity to study the real time effects of the pandemic on older populations in varying areas.

COVID and older populations

A year in to this pandemic, we continue to adapt to the changes as they come, as we await the day when we can once again connect with our loved ones. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will be visible long after the vaccines have been completed and much work still needs to be done.

The Centre put a call out to its research affiliates to share their COVID-19 research they are currently under taking. Provided is a summary of these projects.



Partnering to explore COVID-19 public messaging and its impact on internalized ageism among older people

Principal investigators: Drs. Stephanie Chesser and Michelle Porter, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management; Postdoctoral Fellow: Dr. Ruheena Sangrar, Centre on Aging, University of Manitoba

Intense worldwide media coverage of the pandemic has showcased an ageist social discourse that is both prejudicial and dehumanizing to older people. While much has been written about the possible consequences of ageist communications and internalized ageism, it is not yet clear how exposure to a steady stream of ageist messaging and social discourse in the time of COVID-19 is presently impacting the thinking and social behaviours of individual older people in Canada.

The UM's Centre on Aging and the Manitoba Association of Senior Centres have partnered to explore how older people are interpreting and reacting to age-related messaging circulating during the pandemic. Older Manitobans (n=32) were interviewed three times between July 2020 and January 2021, and they also used journals to record some of their thoughts. Findings from this study will be used to create feasible recommendations for how community organizations can immediately begin to counter the negative impacts of COVID-19-related internalized ageism.

Recreation staff in long-term care and their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic

Principal investigators: Drs. Stephanie Chesser and Michelle Porter, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba

The COVID-19 pandemic has had major impacts not only on the operations of long-term care (LTC) facilities, but also on the residents who live there. While much has been written in the media and research literature about the plight of many types of workers within the LTC system, significantly less attention has been paid to those providing recreational opportunities for residents. To help address this gap, researchers from the Centre on Aging and Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management at the University of Manitoba have conducted a pilot study to explore how the pandemic has affected paid recreation staff working within various Manitoba LTC environments.

The findings of this exploratory study related to stresses and challenges encountered, and the positive outcomes of worker solidarity and embracing change will lead to future work to investigate the more lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on recreation programming within LTC.

How has COVID-19 affected family caregivers in Manitoba?

Principal investigators: Dr. Laura Funk, Sociology and Criminology; Ms. Jamie Penner, College of Nursing, University of Manitoba

Caregivers play a major role in providing support to family and friends who have practical, emotional, and/or physical health or age-related needs. Prior to the pandemic, caregivers already had many unmet needs related to providing care while maintaining their own health and wellbeing. The pandemic has introduced new, intense challenges for all Manitobans, including those in a caregiving role.

This study involves an online survey exploring the impact of COVID-19 on caregivers in Manitoba in terms of public health and social distancing measures, changes in health and social care systems, the amount and nature of care provided, caregiver health and wellbeing, and their needs going forward.

Findings will be contextualized with similar surveys being conducted across the country. Results will be used to promote public and political awareness of the need to support caregivers, and to cultivate practical approaches to support family caregivers during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Capturing adults' perspectives on social participation during COVID-19



Principal investigators: Drs. Verena Menec, Community Health Sciences, University of Manitoba; Nancy Newall, Psychology, Brandon University; Patti Parker, University of Alberta

This study provided a snapshot of perspectives from older Manitobans on their social well-being during Spring 2020. This study is part of a Collective Impact project involving organizations whose collective aim is to increase social inclusion of older adults.

A convenience sample was recruited through notices sent to Collective Impact partner senior-serving organizations. The online survey was active for six weeks, May–June 2020, and there were 109 participants (84% females; 75% age 65+). Results indicated 31% felt lonely very often or more (three–four days+/week); which represented an almost three fold increase in comparison to pre-COVID loneliness levels (11%). Fifty-six percent had been able to add at least one (online) activity to replace lost activities at that point.

Results suggest, not surprisingly, increases in loneliness in the face of mandated social distancing. Although the majority had been able to add/replace some lost activities, this required having skills and access to on-line communication platforms.

Post-acute COVID-19 rehabilitation assessment and treatment recommendations: A scoping review

Principal investigator: Dr. Sandra Webber, College of Rehabilitation Sciences; Co-investigators: Ms. Brenda J. Tittlemier, College of Rehabilitation Sciences; Mr. Hal J. Loewen, Neil John Maclean Health Science Library, University of Manitoba

Researchers in the College of Rehabilitation Sciences along with a group of five Master of Physical Therapy students conducted a scoping review of studies published in five databases in 2020 to identify and synthesize outpatient rehabilitation assessment and treatment recommendations for adults experiencing persistent signs and symptoms post-COVID-19. Forty-eight articles were reviewed that fit our criteria (11 systematic reviews, 1 scoping review, 6 original research studies, 4 consensus guidelines, 26 narrative reviews and editorials/commentaries).

Recommended outcomes included exercise tolerance, respiratory function, muscle strength, and activities of daily living (ADL) or functional independence. Recommended treatments included respiratory rehabilitation, exercise therapy, education, psychological support, activities of daily living/gait training, traditional Chinese medicine, and cognitive and vocational rehabilitation. A manuscript of this work is currently under review with a peer-reviewed journal.



Post discharge tele-monitoring of coronavirus survivors for long-term impacts and point-of-care

Principal investigator: Dr. Zahra Moussavi, Price Faculty of Engineering; Co-principal investigator: Dr. Clare Ramsey, Max Rady College of Medicine, University of Manitoba

The goal of this project is development of a tele-monitoring solution for the long-term monitoring of COVID-19 survivors. Using our team's existing bio-instrumentation technologies and years of experience, we have developed a package of equipment recording pulse oximetry, blood pressure, heart rate and breathing and swallowing sounds. The system is augmented by regular videoconferencing sessions with an assistant twice a week for four months.

The expected outcomes are: 1) collection of reliable and objective information on the long-term impacts of COVID-19, 2) developing an all-in-one technology for future applications, 3) collection of objective and actionable information that can be used to optimize care and treatment plans for patients, 4) better care and treatment for all strata of society regardless of the remoteness of the residence, and 5) improved mental health and recovery of patients.

A touchless tool to screen for COVID-19 at industries and airports

Principal investigator: Dr. Zahra Moussavi, Price Faculty of Engineering; Co-principal investigator: Dr. Clare Ramsey, Max Rady College of Medicine, University of Manitoba

This project offers an innovative, simple-to-implement and quick screening tool for this purpose. Based on our many years of respiratory sounds analysis for diagnostic purposes, we hypothesize that breathing sounds of a COVID-19 positive person would have different characteristics even if the person is asymptomatic. We have developed an app to record breathing sounds of a person with a smartphone, while wearing mask.

To use the proposed screening tool, a smartphone is held within one centimetre of an individual's mouth and the individual instructed to take five deep breaths through the mouth. The app will

first use its acoustic analysis to identify sounds as healthy or abnormal. If the outcome is abnormal, then a questionnaire will be provided, along with a further acoustic analysis to rule out other common comorbid conditions (e.g. chronic lung disease). Finally, based on the inputs, the diagnostic algorithm will decide if the individual should be referred for further testing or not.

Developing algorithms that use individual mobility data to support tracking and contact tracing of SARS-CoV-2 causing COVID-19 and future pandemics



Principal investigator: Dr. Marcia Friesen, Price Faculty of Engineering; Co-principal investigator: Dr. Bob McLeod, Price Faculty of Engineering, University of Manitoba

This project is developing technology which public health authorities and governments can use for contact tracing during pandemics and other states of emergency. The technology uses data from telecommunication service providers and social media apps to demonstrate the movements of individuals and groups in disease spread models, while protecting individual identities. When public health tools such as quarantine, isolation, and physical distancing measures are applied, the algorithms can support efforts to identify and isolate infected individuals as early as possible, carry out comprehensive contact tracing of known infected individuals, and visualize mobility patterns in

communities to assess the most effective strategies to minimize transmission (e.g. various levels of 'lockdown' and easing of restrictions/return to normal'). The project is grounded in computer engineering areas of machine learning and computer modeling and simulation.

Moral injury in long-term care moral injury in long-term care during the COVID-19 pandemic: Assessment and intervention development using an innovative multi-method approach

Principal investigator: Dr. Kristin Reynolds, Psychology, University of Manitoba; Co-investigators: Drs. Natalie Mota, Clinical Health Psychology; Leslie Roos, Psychology; Renée El-Gabalawy, Anesthesia and Clinical Health Psychology; Ryan Giuliano, Psychology; and Maia Kredentser, Clinical Health Psychology, University of Manitoba

The aim of this research is to understand the psychological and physical impact of moral injury among frontline long-term care staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moral injury is defined as "perpetrating, failing to prevent, bearing witness to, or learning about acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (Litz et al., 2009). We can also describe moral injury as when actions/behaviours at work (or inactions/absence of actions) violate one's moral compass. Findings of this research will lead to better understanding of how we can screen for moral injury, and ways we can help to reduce the negative impact of moral injury.

Mental health needs of frontline long-term care staff during the COVID-19 pandemic

Principal investigator: Dr. Kristin Reynolds, Psychology, University of Manitoba

In this research, Dr. Kristin Reynolds and her Health Information Exchange Lab has partnered with Sara Riel Inc., a non-for-profit community mental health organization in Manitoba, to further develop and evaluate an online mental health program based on self-compassion strategies targeted toward long-term care staff and management. This work was informed by initial research by our group completed

in the summer of 2020, exploring the experiences and needs of long-term care staff and management during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The development and evaluation of a telephone-based mental health program for socially isolated older adults



Principal investigator: Dr. Kristin Reynolds, Psychology, University of Manitoba

Canada's population is aging, and at increased risk for loneliness, social isolation, and co-occurring mental health problems including anxiety and depression. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated physical distancing measures have led to compounding concerns of social isolation and loneliness among older adults. Compared to younger age groups, adults ages 65+ are less likely to seek professional psychological help when they need it.

Providing mental health treatment for adults ages 65+ in partnership with community organizations and by telephone may improve service accessibility and enhance social connection and mental health. Our team of researchers, clinical gero-psychologists, and community partners has developed a six-session telephone-based group program for older adults targeting loneliness, social isolation, and co-occurring mental health problems (anxiety, depression) called The CONNECT Program. We are evaluating the program based on its feasibility, acceptability, and effectiveness.



Home / Centre on Aging

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. The Centre has developed a national and international reputation for excellence in research.

And now, for something completely different ...

If you've visited the [Centre on Aging's Web site](#) lately, you might notice something a little different.

On March 5, the Centre re-launched their brand new Web site as part of the university wide brand refresh. The new site, which is more user and mobile friendly has been re-organized to meet the modern needs of our users. While it may take some time to get used to, web visitors will still be able to find information on Centre events, student information, and research related contacts.

Where to find information

Provided is an overview of our newly organized Web site.

Home page

- Quick links to different sections on our site
- Links to Centre staff directory, Advisory Board members, Coalition for Healthy Aging in Manitoba

Research

- Research affiliate listing
- Publications

- Spring Research Symposium
- Current research studies including the Centre on Aging participant database
- Faculty funding opportunities

Student opportunities

- Funding and awards
- Students Targeting Aging Research (STAR)
- Volunteering

Community and partners

- Biweekly updates archives (last four publications)
- Events (including Speaker Series presentations)
- COVID-19 resources for older people

Facts on aging

12 section on aging related statistics

Age-friendly university

University of Manitoba's Age-Friendly University Hub, with age-friendly resources and information