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Manitoba Centre for Health Policy  
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Contact: Jack Rach  
204-789-3669  
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## PLANNING FOR AN AGING POPULATION

### *Extended care for the elderly expected to rise significantly as Manitoba's Baby Boomers age*

As more Manitobans age into their golden years, the need for long-term care also increases. In fact, by 2031, all Baby Boomers will be 65 or older. Almost half will be older than 75, presenting a growing challenge for long-term care strategies.

A new report from the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Medicine estimates how much the need for personal care home beds or equivalent alternatives such as supportive housing and extended home care is expected to rise.

"Manitoba Health's Aging in Place initiative has created relatively new alternatives to care for aging adults, such as supportive housing and home care," says lead researcher, Dr. Dan Chateau. "These have helped to keep the need for personal care homes down. Expanding these services will be crucial for the future care of seniors in the province."

The study from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy found the proportion of Manitobans using personal care homes has shrunk since 1985. In addition to long-term care alternatives, the demand for personal care homes has possibly been lowered by a healthier senior population says Chateau.

There are about 9,600 personal care home beds in Manitoba—about 5,400 are in Winnipeg. Using population projections combined with patterns of use, researchers estimate Manitoba will need space for about 5,100 to 6,300 extra seniors by 2036. Alternatives such as supportive housing and home care could divert 12 per cent or more seniors out of personal care homes.

The extra capacity for long-term care won't be needed all at once and won't be the same across the province. Healthcare planners from the five regional health authorities can use the report to prepare for future needs. For example, from 2011 to 2021, projections show a slight increase in the number of seniors for the Winnipeg

Regional Health Authority while a more dramatic increase is predicted for the Interlake-Eastern, Northern, and Southern regions. During the same time period, the Western RHA should see a decrease in the number of seniors. From 2021 to 2031 demands increase substantially in most RHAs.

The study found other factors can also influence demands for long-term care. For example, being married can reduce the demand for these services while the same is true for having children. A woman who is married is 23 per cent less likely to enter a personal care home while a married man is 40 per cent less likely to do so. Having a single child reduces the likelihood of entering long term care by 27 per cent while two or three children reduces the chances of entering a personal care home by 34 and 38 per cent, respectively.

“Families can make a huge difference by preventing or reducing the need for PCHs and alternatives, but some have a bigger impact than others. On average, a husband is almost as good as one child and a wife is better than three,” says Chateau.

The report did find however, that Manitoban families are having fewer children. This is particularly true of Winnipeg, where the proportion of people with no children has risen to one in five. In turn, this limits the network of people able to care for aging relatives and strains long-term care resources.

*MCHP is a research unit in the department of community health sciences in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Manitoba. Research scientists and their collaborators at MCHP study health services, population and public health, and the social determinants of health using data from the entire population of Manitoba. Most of the research answers questions of interest to policy makers based on a formal association with Manitoba Health and input from other government departments.*



**Media note: Dr. Dan Chateau is available for interviews.**

**For more information, please contact Jack Rach, communications officer, Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, at: 204-789-3669.**

**The summary and full report will be available for download on October 4 from <http://mchp-appserv.cpe.umanitoba.ca/deliverablesList.html>**