

Centre on AGING

Newsletter, Vol 27, No. 2 ▲ University of Manitoba ▲ ISSN 0826-4694 ▲ SUMMER 2009

Living Life to the Fullest

The Centre on Aging held its 26th annual Spring Research Symposium on Monday, May 4, 2009. Over 450 individuals registered for the event. The following is an excerpt from Peggy Prendergast's presentation at the opening plenary. The full text is available on the Centre's web site: www.umanitoba.ca/centres/aging



Fridge magnets are important in my life. How about this one! "A woman is like a tea bag – you never know how strong she is until she gets into hot water."

My task is to answer the question; "What is retirement going to be like and my expectations as a retired older person?" Have you ever asked yourself the question "Who is it I am meant to be?" or "Am I on this earth at this time and in this place for a reason?"

I am going to take you on a life journey. Not a sight-seeing journey of places and events like an autobiography but on a spiritual journey inside. I hope as I speak it will inspire you to look inside your

life to find that essence of your being that gives you energy. That energy that is the reason you look forward to every day with wonder and enthusiasm no matter what age you happen to be. That energy that keeps you dreaming about what might be, possibly for the world but definitely what might be next for you to learn and explore about yourself and your life. Why would you plan ahead for retirement or better still why would you plan your life at all?

Let us explore retirement for example. What is being retired? Is it being, as the word suggests, tired? Should we follow the stereotypic picture of sitting in a rocking chair, probably watching TV and just being lazy and so-called happy possibly being dependent on our children or others for that happiness? Should it be, like TV ads suggest, playing on far away beaches with our children and grandchildren, looking like we are 40 years old with white hair? We have, after all, worked hard and isn't this the life we should expect? Did you know that many people are now living more years in retirement than they were employed?

Adrienne Clarkson suggested in her explanation of retirement at Creative Retirement's 20th Anniversary luncheon that retirement is an opportunity to explore becoming who it is we are meant to be. Her thesis was, that as children we are

guided and influenced by our parents and family as to who we are, then our schooling and our peers add to that definition. Once we embark on a career or go to work our employer has an overriding influence on our identity and direction in life. When we become parents we have the prime responsibility and care for our children. They are our priority. We are other directed. What is it that others expect from me? How can I be the best I can be as a daughter, wife, mother, and in my own case, a teacher? We were constantly being evaluated; at work, by our employer and in our homes by family and society.

Once retired it is our opportunity to become who it is we are meant to be. Not necessarily who we want to be but who our experience up until now and our life forces have brought us to. I am now in charge of deciding who to listen to. Is my decision coming from within or are others deciding who it is I can become? How many of us ever realize our potential? How many of us even think about it from day to day? How many of us take time to dream; especially as we get older. Instead, through email, we exchange jokes about being old and think we are too old to be doing many of the things we secretly dream of doing.

One of the ways to help the process is to look back on the so called disasters

in our lives. Scott Peck began his book "The Road Less Traveled" by saying, "Life is not easy." I believe the hard times are the important lessons we learn in life. I have been widowed twice in my life. I learned much from my first encounter 25 years ago but after the second time I looked up and said, "I guess I am meant to learn how to live alone!" We have to search within for answers and certainly for strength. We can identify what we value in life and find ways to live by those values. Some of these values come from our past.

We still need to ask the question, "How do we make dreams come true?" Start with the end in sight. Write your own obituary for example. What is it you want people to know about you or better still what do you want people to say about you at the end of your life?

When you plan for retirement you need to dream, envision what your life could be like. Then prepare your mind to take action. In a truly practical way break down your dream into a goal statement that you can translate into an action plan. Figure out your time plan to make it happen and check along the way to see if you are getting there. I always wanted to learn to play the piano. I bought an expensive digital piano when I first retired and have been taking lessons ever since.

It means having a philosophy about money. I can only tell you mine. I am going to "Die Broke." This book espouses very interesting ideas about annuities, inheritances and living up to your values. I must say though there were times this past fall and winter I began to ask: "Do I have to die if I go



broke?" Like most of you I was hit hard by the money crisis in the world. One of the things I am learning is to invest.

Money is one resource but of more importance is the resource of time. It is equal for everyone but do we use our time to fulfill our life or do we just put in time. We are all going to die. We just don't know when. If our goals are achieved by starting with the end in mind then I think we have to give ourselves a number. For instance, I am going to live to be 100. That means I am going to plan to live that long but because of the energy factor in what I do I am doing I live as if every day is my last day. It is the only way I can keep prioritizing what is important to me.

It is basically living by the principles and practices you will find embodied in Stephen Covey's book entitled, "First Things First." Live, love, learn and leave a legacy are those principles.

Live by looking after your health – this body is the only one you get to schlep around in, look after it.

Love. Keep developing new relationships and nurturing the ones you have. You need to live and love in the world.

Learn. When I first retired I took a course that looked interesting at Creative Retirement. It was a great place for me to meet people who were newly retired. I learned a lot about making new friends and trying out new ideas. I am now learning to play the trombone in an Adult Learning Band. We played yesterday in a concert during the morning service at the church we rehearse at every Saturday morning. It was an awesome experience.

Leaving a legacy is not just about what you do with your money. The legacy

of ourselves we leave to the world is the most interesting part. You never see yourself as others see you. You never know what anyone will find helpful in what you do or say. Put another way, you can write developmental objectives for yourself that are: physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual. Use a day planner to make sure the activities you are actually pursuing in your daily life match up with all your objectives and once a week or a couple of times a month check back and see how you are doing. Know what your roles in life are and their relative importance to you. Establish new identities from time to time and see how they feel. Break out of your shell and try on a new skin. We live in a time when we as seniors can make new rules for ourselves to live by; age friendly cities for instance can become a reality.

I started with a fridge magnet saying, I will conclude with another: "For the ignorant old age is as winter, for the learned it is the harvest." I hope your harvest is as plentiful as mine.

"For the ignorant old age is as winter, for the learned it is the harvest."

The Centre on Aging would like to thank the following who sponsored our Symposium:

The University of Manitoba's Office of the Vice-President (Research)

The University of Manitoba's Section of Geriatric/Internal Medicine

Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Living Secretariat: Age-Friendly Manitoba

Manitoba Heart and Stroke Foundation

The University of Manitoba Alumni Association Inc.

Aramark Food Services

Upcoming Events

Canadian Association on Gerontology Annual Scientific and Educational Meetings 2009

Where the Rivers Meet, Merging Perspectives on Aging

Active Ageing - Global Opportunities

Jane Barratt, PhD

Secretary General
International Federation on Ageing

Tuesday, September 8, 2009

12:00 noon to 1:30 p.m.

Theatre A

Basic Medical Sciences Bldg
730 William Ave.

Dr. Barratt is committed to strengthening the roles and relationships between government, NGOs, academia and the private sector toward improving the quality of life of older people. This commitment has always been driven by her interest and passion in understanding the evolution of ageing issues and the corresponding public and private sector responses in different regions of the world. More recently Dr Barratt has been a strong contributor to the international dialogue on how the social, cultural and physical environments can impact on the lives of older people. Adjunct research positions at Australian Universities serve to strengthen her interest in these areas, which include mature employment, the nexus between inclusion and marginalization, the impact of the environment on older people and the rights of older people.

Following Dr. Barratt's lecture, interested individuals are invited to a light lunch and further discussions with Dr. Barratt.

October 22 - 24, 2009

Winnipeg, MB, The Fairmont

Barbara Payne, PhD, Chair, Local Organizing Committee

Trish Macdonald, BHEc Conference Manager, Centre on Aging

Keynote speakers include:

Norma Drosdowech will present the opening keynote. See Centre on Aging News, Vol 27, No. 1, Winter 2009.

Valerie Gideon, PhD is the Regional Director – Ontario Region with Health Canada. She is a proud member of the Mi'Kmaq of Gesgapegiag. Dr Gideon is a First Nations health information researcher, manager and policy analyst, with years of experience in community-based research initiatives and health infrastructure project and policy development. She was a founding member of the Canadian Society of Telehealth, the use of information and communications technologies to deliver health services and transmit health information over both long and short distances. Telehealth helps eliminate distance barriers and improve equitable access to services in remote and rural communities. It is about transmitting voice, data, images, and information rather than moving patients or health practitioners and educators.

Max Cynader, PhD, is the Director, Brain Research Centre, Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute and The University of British Columbia, a Professor of Ophthalmology, and holds a Canada Research Chair in Brain

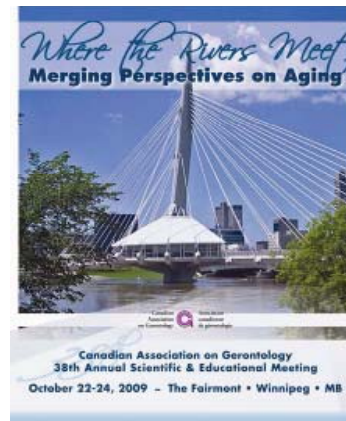
Development. Dr. Cynader is a world leader in the field of understanding of the functioning of the brain and the visual system, has shown excellence as an educator in the classroom and laboratories and in conveying to the public the importance contemporary science. He has increased knowledge about the mechanisms by which early use or misuse of the brain effect its functioning for life.

Stephen Cunnane, PhD is a Professor in the Departments of Endocrinology and Medicine as well as physiology and biophysics at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec and holds a Canada Research Chair on the Use Of Dietary Fatty Acids And Cognitive Function During Aging. Polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA's) supply fuel to the brain and substances necessary to brain membranes. Research has shown that early cognitive impairment seems

to occur when there is a major change in the way the body uses dietary fats. Dr. Cunnane believes that by understanding how and why this change occurs it may be possible to develop strategies such as dietary recommendations and medication to delay the onset of cognitive decline.

James Fries, M.D., Emeritus (Active) Professor of Medicine, Stanford University School of Medicine, is internationally recognized as "the mind behind the compression of morbidity theory". Over the years his research has focused on strategies to

... continues p.4



Manitoba Age-Friendly Communities Update

CAG (continued)

promote healthy aging and decrease morbidity through changes in lifestyle, self-management strategies, preventive medicine and health promotion. In a December 2008 "Sagecast", Fries explained that according to the theory of compression of morbidity, an individual's active and vital years of life would increase in length, the onset of morbidity would be postponed, and the total amount of lifetime disability would decrease. He notes that results from two U.S. longitudinal studies show that those who exercise regularly developed disability significantly later.

Verena Menec Re-appointed Director

Verena Menec, Director, Centre on Aging, July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2009, has been re-appointed Director for a five-year period beginning July 1, 2010. Dr. Menec is a Professor in Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and holds a Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging.

Barbara Payne, Acting Director

The Centre on Aging is pleased to announce that **Barbara Payne**, PhD, Associate Professor, Community Health Sciences, Faculty of Medicine/Sociology, Faculty of Arts, has been appointed Acting Director, Centre on Aging, July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010. Dr. Payne brings with her a wealth of knowledge in the fields of social gerontology, health sociology, oral health and older adults, women as caregivers, and successful aging.

In February 2008, 70 representatives from 10 Manitoba communities came together at the Age-Friendly Communities Summit in Portage la Prairie. In October 2008, an additional 17 communities became part of the Age-Friendly Manitoba initiative. Intake of communities was through the Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat.

As part of the Age-Friendly Communities Research Alliance, led by Verena Menec, PhD, Director, Centre on Aging and Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging, Principal Investigator and Patti Chiappetta, Manitoba Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat, Community Lead consultations have been held in some of these communities. Consultations included older adults, caregivers, and representatives from the local government, business sector senior-serving organizations. The purpose of these consultations was to gather information on the needs and areas of priority for each community. Areas of priority are being or have been addressed as below.

Rural Municipality of **Roblin**: A seating area has been developed at Rock Lake beach, an area visited in the summer by Roblin's community



handivan and members of the Adult Day Program. This will allow all seniors a place to rest and enable those with mobility restrictions the opportunity to disembark the van and enjoy the scenery and outdoors.

Town of **Gladstone**: To assist seniors to stay active by making their travel safe, deteriorating sidewalks will be replaced. The majority of the suites in a new 10 unit apartment block will be

available to older adults, adequate passageways will encourage walking and the use of wheelchairs and other mobility aids to access businesses and churches on the street.

Town of **Gilbert Plains**: Parking for those who have limited mobility has been put in place; crosswalks have been



painted on the main street and other designated areas to improve visibility and safety; public awareness of seniors' issues, senior recognition and appreciation is being raised through the town and senior newsletters.

Village of **Cartwright**: Funding for renovations to a washroom at the Seniors Drop in Centre will allow seniors with mobility limitations to attend social events thereby enhancing their quality of life.


Town of **Arborg**: Sidewalks have been fixed, power door locks have been put in place at the medical centre, and crosswalks have been painted to improve visibility and safety.

Local Government District of **Pinawa**: A ramp and auto-opening doors have been constructed at the Vanier Centre to make the building more accessible, as well as at the school as it serves as the community centre and library.



For additional information go to: <http://umanitoba.ca/centres/aging/cura/index.html>

Did you know...

- The Government of Manitoba provides a Primary Caregiver Tax Credit (PCGTC). This credit is a partnership between Manitoba Health and Healthy Living (MHHL) and Manitoba Finance to provide up to \$1,020 a year/ care recipient (maximum 3 at any one given time) to individuals who are primary caregivers for spouses, relatives, neighbours or friends. The goal of this program is to recognize the significant role that caregivers play in helping people, who are dependent on others, to remain in the community for as long as possible. Additional information is available at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/finance/tao/>
 - **Lorna Guse**, Faculty of Nursing and Research Affiliate, Centre on Aging, is the lead researcher on an international project studying how Paro, a highly sophisticated robotic animal from Japan, can provide comfort to individuals with cognitive impairments. Paro's body is covered with more than 100 sensors that can respond to touch, light and sounds. Developed by Takanori Shibata in 2003 as a form of "pet therapy" for children and cognitively impaired adults, researchers have discovered that individuals with severe memory loss, personality changes and hallucinations were calmed by Paro. This summer Dr. Guse will continue testing Paro with residents in Deer Lodge Centre.
- 
- Winnipeg *in motion* and the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management partnered to produce an instructional DVD for older adults to assist them in adding physical activity to their day! The DVD was filmed over three days at the Shaftesbury Park Retirement Residence with participants from the Residence as well as the broader community taking part. The 45 minute exercise class includes warm-up, cardio, strength, balance, cool down and stretching exercises. For a free copy go to: http://www.winnipeginmotion.ca/older/in_motion_older_adult_exercise_video/ or contact the Active Living Coalition for Older Adults in Manitoba (ALCOA) at 632-3947 (toll free - 1-866-202-6663).
 - The **Medication Information Line for the Elderly (MILE)** is a service provided free of charge by the **University Centre Pharmacy** to anyone who has questions about their medications. These can include prescription medicines, non-prescription medicines, vitamins, supplements, herbal or natural products, drug interactions, herb-drug interactions and any other information that an individual would need. MILE line is open Monday to Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.. Tel: 204-474-6493 Fax: 204-474-7572
Toll Free: 1-800-432-1960, ext 6493 Email: mile_resource@umanitoba.ca
 - **Mary Shariff**, LL.M., Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, received funding from the University of Manitoba's Research Grants Program to conduct research on aging, technology, bioethics and the law. She found that legislative initiatives legalizing assisted suicide continue to be advanced around the world. Despite the obvious need for legislative intervention, the legality of assisted suicide continues to be a widely contentious issue in Canada and prosecutorial involvement is inconsistent and unpredictable. In jurisdictions where assisted suicide is legal there is an increasing "liberalization of attitudes" regarding ending life along with an increase in assisted suicide demands for "life fatigue". This attitudinal trend is likely to increase because of growing global awareness and support for patient self-determination and autonomy. The Canadian legal voice here is absent. Current academic discussions (US, UK, Australia) on life extension centre around the following themes:
 - Control/stakeholder input into life extension research;
 - Ethics: role of medicine in anti-aging, why prolonged life is or is not ethically wrong;
 - Social and economic: intergenerational equity; burden on young to care for growing class of elderly; and,
 - Legal: equality and access to regenerative therapies; intellectual property rights; patient safety and liability of physicians for novel medical treatments.

To date no issue of biogerontology, life extension, or human enhancement has been discussed in or reported by Canadian Parliament.

Why invest valuable resources to develop competing technologies for longer life when we have not yet come to any legal consensus as to how we are permitted to die?

Student Awards

Kristin Reynolds, MA student in Psychology is the recipient of the **Centre on Aging Betty Havens Memorial Graduate Fellowship**.

Focus: To determine the mental health information needs and preferences and help-seeking for psychological problems and to make a comparison of younger and older adults. Information from this study will be used to develop aids to improve patient knowledge, satisfaction and participation in decision-making. (Advisor: Corey Mackenzie)

Pavithra Rajan, MSc student, Kinesiology has been awarded the **Jack MacDonell Scholarship for Research in Aging**

Focus: To examine the effect of elastic resistance training on ankle dorsiflexor strength and power in mobility-impaired older women. Muscle strength is an important predictor of independence in older adults; reduction is associated with gait abnormalities, imbalance and fall risk. The use of elastic resistance bands are low cost, portable, versatile and are appropriate for home

programs, especially for older adults as they are a safe mode to increase strength and have shown to have a higher rate of compliance. (Advisor: Michelle Porter)

Kim Nozick, MA student, Psychology, is the recipient of the **Esther & Samuel Milmot Scholarship**

Focus: To investigate the benefits of positive psychology into research on healthy aging. While both self-compassion and self-forgiveness

benefit physical and mental health in younger adults, it is not known if the results generalize to older adults nor have they been examined together in a single study. (Advisor: Corey Mackenzie)

Eli Akude, PhD student in Pharmacology and Therapeutics has been awarded a **Manitoba Alzheimer Society Graduate Fellowship**.

Focus: The process of aging involves changes in the peripheral nervous system including loss of myelinated and unmyelinated nerve fibres and abnormalities such as demyelination and dystrophic axonal swellings. These normal age-related changes in the nerves are accelerated in disease conditions such as diabetic neuropathy. The aims of this study are to examine the direct impact of 4-HNE on axonal plasticity and regeneration of cultured adult rat sensory neurons, and to determine if the alterations in mitochondrial activity are associated

with changes in axonal plasticity. (Advisor: Paul Fernyhough)

Avid Khamenehfar, PhD student in Chemistry was also awarded a **Manitoba Alzheimer Society Graduate Fellowship**.

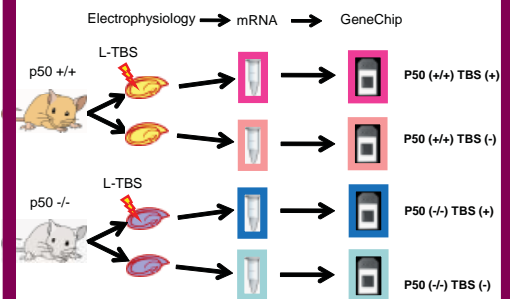
Focus: Examination of Creatine Deposits and Environs in TgCRND8 Mouse Brain by Raman and sFTIR Microscopy. Both Fourier Transform Infrared and Raman microspectroscopies will be used to identify plaques and the surrounding elevated lipids in snap-frozen tissue samples. Acquired results will be compared and discussed in conjunction with standard histological tests for relevant targets. (Advisor: Kathleen Gough)



l to r: Pavithra Rajan, Eli Akude, Kristin Reynolds, Kim Nozick

Spring Symposium Poster Competition

Solmaz Nafez, MSc student in Pharmacology and Therapeutics, was the recipient of the student poster competition award at the Centre's 26th annual Spring Research Symposium. Her poster, entitled *The Induction of Early Growth Response 2 (Egr-2) is Triggered by Neuronal Activity-Dependent NF-kB Activation*. The focus of her study was to provide evidence for the link between Egr-2 induction and Nuclear Factor Kappa B (NF-kB) signaling pathway. NF-kB mediated signaling plays a critical role in many biological processes. The hippocampus from NF-kB p50 knock out mice (p50^{-/-}) and wild-type control mice (p50^{+/+}) were removed, dissected, sectioned and subjected to various tests.



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: **Verena Menec**, PhD
Canada Research Chair in Healthy Aging
Professor, Community Health Sciences
Faculty of Medicine

The Centre on Aging News is published 3 times a year and is available on our web site or by request. Direct comments and inquiries to:

Centre on Aging News
338 Isbister Building
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB Canada
R3T 2N2

Tel: (204) 474-8754
Fax: (204) 474-7576
E-mail: aging@umanitoba.ca
Web: <http://www.umanitoba.ca/centres/aging>