

RESEARCH ON THE RUN

Integrated Care and Transitions

Understanding geriatric care assessment practices in home care: the Geriatric Care Assessment Practices (G-CAP) Survey

What do nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in home care use to assess the needs of geriatric clients? Most use their clinical skills and not standardized assessment tools

Key learnings

Home care is a challenging sector in which to provide geriatric care, due to its isolating nature for individual providers who work independently in individuals' homes. Very little is known about how nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists assess needs, though there are many standardized tools for doing so.

The providers in this study rely on their own clinical judgment more than any standardized assessment tool, and a majority did not know about the RAI-HC even though its use is mandated for use in home care.

This research helps to understand the significant challenges and opportunities for enhanced integration across these disciplines in geriatric home health care.

Project overview

Two levels of geriatric assessment exist in Ontario home care:

- The System Level—Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) are mandated to use the interRAI Home Care Assessment (RAI-HC) for allocation of government-funded home care services for long-stay home care clients
- The Agency Level—Frontline providers from multiple disciplines individually collect the information they need to provide care to geriatric clients and their specific assessment methods are not well-defined or understood. RAI-HC data collected by CCACs are not routinely shared with or used by direct-service home care agencies.

The purpose of this research is to explore the geriatric care assessment practices of frontline nurses, occupational therapists (OTs) and physiotherapists (PTs) in home care.

What did we do?

A literature review, environmental scan and expert interviews led to the development of the Geriatric Care Assessment Practices (G-CAP) survey—an online, self-report tool with 33 questions related to the following five areas: 1) Assessment methods; 2) Attitudes toward assessment; 3) Perceptions of the RAI-HC; 4) Interdisciplinary Collaboration; and 5) Demographic information—that takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. The survey was pilot tested with frontline home care nurses, OTs and PTs at a single home care agency.

What did we find?

- Survey participants use their own clinical observation and interview skills far more often than any standardized tools for geriatric assessment.
- Just over half of the participants had heard of the RAI-HC;

however, on average, they never use it.

- Participants agreed they could use client information collected by other health care professionals, but also agreed they must conduct client assessments themselves in order to provide care and only sometimes share and rarely receive assessment information from other health care providers.
- The pilot of the new G-CAP survey showed that it is a valid tool for measuring assessment practices across disciplines.

Next Steps:

This pilot study formed the basis for a wide-scale administration of the G-CAP survey across multiple home care agencies in Ontario. Results of this wider study will be reported in another Research on the Run, and be used to inform the development and testing of a more integrated geriatric care planning approach.

Who were the researchers?

Principal Investigator

Justine Giosa, MSc, Research Associate
Saint Elizabeth Research Centre

SE Researchers

Paul Holyoke, PhD, Director
Saint Elizabeth Research Centre

Grace Lui, MSc

External Researcher

Paul Stolee, PhD, Associate Professor
University of Waterloo

What was SE's role in this research?

This research was led by researchers from the Saint Elizabeth Research Centre and involved management and leadership staff in participant recruitment and frontline staff to participate in the survey.

About our partners:

The Geriatric Health Systems (GHS) Research Group includes interdisciplinary researchers, graduate and undergraduate students and research staff at the University of Waterloo. The mission of the GHS group is “Meaningful partnerships; Collaborative research; Integrated solutions; Better geriatric care”.

How was this research funded?

The project was funded by Saint Elizabeth Research Centre.

For more information about this project, please contact

Paul Holyoke paulholyoke@saintelizabeth.com

OR

Paul Stolee pstolee@uwaterloo.ca

About the Saint Elizabeth Research Centre

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At the Saint Elizabeth Research Centre, we study the needs of people, their caregivers, and health care providers to develop innovative solutions to improve health and care experiences across the continuum/ more effective approaches to care. The Research Centre has four areas of focus: integrated care and transitions, end of life care, caregivers and person and family centred care.

Our goal is to improve people's health and care.
We work on innovative solutions for tough problems.

We see possibilities everywhere.