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WOMEN'S AGE LAB

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Women's Age Lab

Welcome to our Fall 2023 Newsletter!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

WCHH WOMEN'S COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Women's Age Lab

IMPACT REPORT

2022/2023

We had a very busy summer and that's now turning into an even busier fall!

On October 1st, we celebrated our second anniversary with the launch of our Impact Report just in time for International Day of Older Persons.

We are proud of the growth of Women's Age Lab over the past year, with the addition of many new staff members and scientists, and embarking on exciting, multi-year research projects. Our work last year included many initiatives to promote the health and well-being of older women, starting with our campaign to raise awareness about gendered ageism, wrapping up our intersectoral collaboration on addressing loneliness with a virtual workshop series to promote digital literacy for older adults, and our ongoing international work to reduce prescribing cascades and increase medication safety.

[Click here](#) to see our Impact Report for details on everything that we have been up to this last year.

In this newsletter you will find some more highlights of our exciting national and international work.

The Lancet

Women's Age Lab is proud to share the recent profile, "Paula Rochon: championing the health needs of older women," published by The Lancet. The profile highlights Dr. Rochon's exciting career, body of research, her role as a mentor for scientists and trainees, and the founding of Women's Age Lab.

"I want to actively highlight the systemic barriers that women face in advancing their careers and advocate for a more equitable landscape for women's health researchers."

The full profile can be found [here](#).

Update on NORCs

We were pleased to announce we were awarded a Healthy Cities grant from the Canadian Institute of Health Research and in February we received confirmation of additional funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to invest into our Healthy Cities Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) research project. The PHAC funding will allow us to study beyond the implementation of NORC models and what determines their success, to include health and wellness outcomes, and extend our understanding of NORC programming in different cities, particularly for equity-deserving populations.

In recent months, we have been busy growing our research team, building relationships with key partners, planning for study implementation (selecting sites and identifying data collection tools), putting enablers in place such as funding for our community partners, setting up governance structures, and engaging with the Women's College Hospital Research Ethics Board for approval of the study to move forward.

This fall, with the support of our partners at the [NORC Innovation Centre](#) (NIC), we aim to begin data collection at the Toronto sites through site observations, a survey, as well as resident and staff interviews, and focus groups. Working with the NIC, we are actively engaging residents in piloting our data collection tools and will be adjusting our research design as needed based on their feedback and that of the NIC team.

Prescribing Cascades on the International Stage

Women's Age Lab scientists Dr. Paula Rochon and Professor Rachel Savage recently had the opportunity to present our iKASCADE research at this year's European Geriatric Medicine Society's Annual Conference in Helsinki, Finland. Along with our international collaborators from six countries, we presented a symposium "Sex and Gender Matter: Lessons from an International Research Collaboration on Polypharmacy."

Dr. Rochon also gave an invited presentation on the evolution of prescribing cascades, presented at the Special Interest Group on Pharmacology, and our team put together a research poster. The key international investigators met in-person for our annual iKASCADE team meeting to reflect on the accomplishments and progress of the project, and future opportunities to collaborate.



Dr. Paula Rochon Presenting at the 19th EuGMS Conference in Helsinki, Finland. Photo: [@n_vandervelde](#)



"Sex and Gender Matter" Symposium Presenters & iKASCADE Team Members. (L to R) Prof. Kieran Dalton, Prof. Rachel Savage, Prof. Mirko Petrovic, Dr. Paula Rochon & Dr. Dennis Mahoney. Photo: [@kierandaltong9](#)

Exploring possible gender disparities in primary care physicians' pharmacotherapeutic decisions for older adults through the lens of iGWG's Gender Integration Continuum framework

Aleka Kthupi¹, Kieran Dalton¹, McCreedy, Sarah Savage¹, Robin Mason¹, Paula A. Rochon¹, Parvya Bortani¹, Joyce Li¹, Amanda Gamble¹, Lisa

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INTRODUCTION

Equitable healthcare addresses fairness and addresses the potential for and vulnerability within older adults who often require tailored interventions to achieve optimal health outcomes.

To provide equitable care, clinicians must consider their patients' sociocultural context and gender-specific factors.



Figure 1: Equity to Health Inequity

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

We explored primary care physicians' experiences of and contributions to gender-related sociocultural factors in pharmacotherapeutic decisions for older adults and whether they responded with medication.



Figure 2: Research Objective

METHODS

We interviewed Canadian primary care physicians.

Participants were recruited to either an older male or female cohort through a purposive sampling strategy to explore gender-specific factors (Figure 2).

Participants described their thought process and provided a written response to the research question: "What factors influence your decision-making about medication?"

Qualitative analysis was guided by grounded theory and changes in the following factors would affect treatment (Table 1). Participants were asked to provide a written response to the following question: "What factors influence your decision-making about medication?"

Thematic analysis was performed using an inductive approach to the Gender Integration Continuum framework (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Methods

RESULTS

Participant physicians (7 females and 7 males) participated (Table 1).

When hypothetical scenarios were posed, most physicians demonstrated an awareness of gender-related factors, and the awareness did not influence their selected treatment plans.

Physicians rarely considered sex and gender in gender-related sociocultural factors.

When selecting treatment, there was discrepancy between physicians' treatment decisions based on gender-related factors and their expressed view that patients' gender would not affect treatment decisions.



Figure 4: Results

CONCLUSIONS

Our findings suggest that primary care physicians' experiences of and contributions to gender-related sociocultural factors in pharmacotherapeutic decisions for older adults and whether they responded with medication.

When selecting treatment, there was discrepancy between physicians' treatment decisions based on gender-related factors and their expressed view that patients' gender would not affect treatment decisions.



Figure 5: Conclusions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the following individuals for their contributions to this research: Dr. Kieran Dalton, Dr. Sarah Savage, Dr. Mirko Petrovic, Dr. Paula Rochon, Dr. Dennis Mahoney, Dr. Parvya Bortani, Dr. Joyce Li, Dr. Amanda Gamble, Dr. Lisa



Figure 6: Acknowledgements

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Figure 7: Contact Information

Our poster presentation for EuGMS 2023 created by Aleka Kthupi and other Women's Age Lab Team Members.

Read more about our iKASCADEs work on [our website!](#)

Partner Spotlight - SE Health



Health

Our partners at SE Health have launched a new initiative, the *Age-Positive Alliance*, an effort to change the narrative about aging and foster a culture of inclusion and respect for all ages. See below for more information!

Have you ever been judged by your age?

Unfortunately, many of us have or will experience age discrimination, also known as ageism.

You're invited to be part of a global movement dedicated to creating an age-inclusive future, and become an Age-Positive Ally!

Join hundreds of like-minded people who are passionate about creating an age-positive world. Whether you are an individual or representing an organization, get access to resources to take action, make connections and spread the word to drive transformational change within our workplaces and communities. Every conversation and action helps. Everyone is welcome!

Ready to take action? Yes, I'm in!



Trainee Spotlight

Summer was a busy term for us as we welcomed four trainees to Women's Age Lab. They brought their diverse educational backgrounds and experiences to the team. See what projects they were hard at work on below.



Carley Moore is a first-year Master of Public Health Student at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, with a specialization in Aging, Palliative and Support Care Across the Life Course. Carley completed her BA (Hons) at the University of Toronto in 2022. Her research interests include intersectionality, equity, housing security, sexual health and overall well-being of older adults.



Serrina Philip is a first year MPH student at the University of Toronto completing a collaborative specialization in Aging, Palliative, and Support Care Across the Life Course. Serrina completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo, majoring in Public Health and minoring in Gerontology, Mental Health, and Health Policy.

Her research project focused on evaluating best practices and creating toolkits for older adults, care partners, and health professionals to support the implementation, spread and scale of NORC models of varying intensities.



Joelle Li is a summer research student and is in her 3rd year of medical school at the University of Toronto. She graduated from McMaster University with a Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) and her interest in the health of older women stems from her volunteer work in the community, whereby she conducts regular home visits to older adults in Toronto to foster social connectedness.

Joelle is conducting a scoping review following the rigorous Arksey and O'Malley methodology. Her review focused on assessing gender and gender-related sociocultural variables as it pertains to potentially inappropriate medication prescribing in older adults.



Gagandeep Saini is Geriatric Medicine Summer Older Adult Research (SOAR) Experience student. She completed her Bachelor of Health Sciences and Master of Public Health degrees from McMaster University, and is in her second year of medical school at the University of Toronto. Her passion for women's health and healthy aging stems from her previous roles at Baycrest, SickKids, and Ontario Health.

Gagandeep worked with our Healthy Cities team on the NORCs project.

Learn More

In Case You Missed it: Trends in Delirium and New Antipsychotic and Benzodiazepine Use Among Hospitalized Older Adults Before and After the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Drs. Reppas-Rindlisbacher and Rochon from Women's Age Lab recently published an article titled "Trends in Delirium and New Antipsychotic and Benzodiazepine Use Among Hospitalized Older Adults Before and After the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic" published in JAMA Network Open.

The paper explores how the COVID-19 pandemic caused large disruptions to healthcare for hospitalized older adults, especially for those experiencing delirium.

For the full paper, [click here](#).

Corresponding to this study, Drs. Reppas-Rindlisbacher, Stall, and Rochon also published an Op-Ed, "COVID-19 Unleashed A Crisis of Delirium in Our Hospitals" in The Globe and Mail. [Read here](#).

Highlights: In the Media & Recent Awards

Drs. Rochon and Stall have been awarded the University of Toronto's President's Impact Award for their work on the Ontario COVID-19 Science Advisory Table.

Paula Rochon-University of Toronto – Filling a Gap, Women's Age Lab, The Academic Minute.

Rachel Savage-University of Toronto – Reimagining Aging in Place, The Academic Minute.

COVID-19 unleashed a crisis of delirium in our hospitals. The Globe and Mail.

We have a loneliness crisis — it's time to act. Toronto Star.

Why Artificial Intelligence Needs to Consider the Unique Needs of Older Women. Women's eNews.

Recent Publications

Sex-based differences in the association between loneliness and polypharmacy among older adults in Ontario. *Canada Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Unpaid Family Caregiving—The Next Frontier of Gender Equity in a Post-pandemic Future. *JAMA Health Forum*.

Trends in Delirium and New Antipsychotic and Benzodiazepine Use Among Hospitalized Older Adults Before and After the Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *JAMA Network Open*.

Factors associated with loneliness in immigrant and Canadian-born older adults in Ontario, Canada: a population-based study. *BMC Geriatrics*.

STOPP/START Version 3: Even Better with Age. *European Geriatric Medicine*.



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