



Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging Summary of Activities

2021/2022

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O'Brien Institute for Public Health
Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging

WHO WE ARE

The Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging promotes and supports interdisciplinary aging research and education conducted by faculty and students across the University of Calgary, including but not limited to those working in the Cumming School of Medicine, Kinesiology, Nursing, and Social Work. The Centre's goal is to enhance the health and wellness of older adults and better inform public policy on issues pertaining to older adults.

The importance of Centre on Aging activities was underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, our Centre kept the public informed on key issues by hosting virtual public events focused on opportunities and challenges within facility-based continuing care. One of these events explored the challenges of balancing infection prevention & control with quality of life for residents and the workforce. A second explored small home approaches to delivering facility-based continuing care as a promising future direction gaining traction in Alberta and elsewhere. This event was also attended by representatives of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing.

"THINKING SMALL FOR CONTINUING CARE"



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INTERDISCIPLINARY FOCUS

As an interdisciplinary hub, the Centre supported several faculty-led research projects addressing concerns made evident during the pandemic, including challenges arising within continuing care and those experienced by community-dwelling older adults and their care partners. As an example, Centre researchers have been investigating the impact that the growing popularity of “robotic” pets is having for older adults living with dementia in care facilities, a trend that surged as pandemic shutdowns were imposed. Pilot work led by Dr. Ann Toohey (Centre manager) and funded by a SSHRC partnership grant has involved working with the Brenda Strafford Foundation’s recreation team to investigate how these therapeutic devices are shaping practice and quality of life for continuing care residents.

The Centre continued to support the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) and its Calgary Data Collection Site. Nationally, the CLSA quickly pivoted towards using its infrastructure to address the pandemic. More locally, the study team was able to continue to collect invaluable “core” longitudinal data from participants while respecting public health restrictions.



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NATIONAL RECOGNITION

In 2021, the Centre's academic lead, Dr. David Hogan, received a \$75,000 grant allowing the Centre to host the virtual 2022 CIHR Institute on Aging (IA) Summer Program in Aging (SPA). This annual, prestigious national training opportunity brought together 40 top Canadian trainees, selected competitively, with leading researchers for an intensive training program and networking opportunity. The 2022 SPA occurred in May and focused on Neurodegenerative and Cerebrovascular Diseases in Aging. During the 2021/22 fiscal year, Centre on Aging staff created the objectives for the SPA, struck and managed the 2022 SPA planning committee and sub-committees, liaised with CIHR-IA personnel, and oversaw the development of the program's website, online conferencing platform and event program.



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RESEARCH WITH IMPACT

Over the course of Summer 2021, two undergraduate summer studentships were hosted by the Centre. One student's project (Kate McLennan, 3rd year BHSc) led to a comprehensive report for community partner, Calgary Seniors, that evaluated their novel "Pet Assist" volunteer program. Kate's work also resulted in a peer-reviewed open-access publication that is available to practitioners as well as scholars. The second project (Ghozllane Selouani, 2nd year BHSc) resulted in a report that informed the international taskforce of the Global Guidelines for Falls in Older Adults initiative, working towards falls prevention and management.

A third undergraduate student (Maya Goerzen, 3rd year BHSc) accepted a practicum placement in the Centre as part of her Bachelor of Health Sciences Honours degree requirements during the Fall/Winter semesters. For this project, a comprehensive environmental scan of tools to evaluate the age-friendliness of post-secondary institutions was conducted. This work was recently accepted as a peer-reviewed publication and has been leveraged to inform the University's own rigorous age-friendly assessment, being led by Dr. Chantelle Zimmer (Senior Project Coordinator) with the endorsement of the University's Executive Leadership Team (ELT). As the first Canadian post-secondary institution to adapt a validated research instrument for assessing age-friendliness, the ongoing project also represents an international collaboration with several leading American researchers.



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YEAR IN REVIEW

During the 2021/22 fiscal period the Centre successfully:

- Completed an extensive 5-year external review of Centre operations and impact, which is guiding strategic planning for the Centre.
- Created and delivered an 8-week summer program for University of Calgary students exploring interdisciplinary aging topics, which included a final research day opportunity for the participants to present on their own work.
- Recruited and appointed a new Academic Lead, **Dr. Jayna Holroyd-Leduc**, who officially took on this role in July 2022.
- Supported the development of a Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) application focused on innovations in Continuing Care.
- Relocated into the Centre's new office within BSF Cambridge Manor in the University District.
- Led efforts to continue to position the University of Calgary as an age-friendly institution.
- Grew in size and capacity through hiring senior project (Zimmer) and research coordinators (Jayne Beselt, the Centre's research coordinator, was hired with financial support from the Brenda Strafford Foundation Chair in Geriatric Medicine, representing a growing alliance between the Centre and the Chair).
- Maintained its core activities, albeit in a modified fashion secondary to the pandemic.



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