



2023-24

# Annual Report.

**Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging**

[www.obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/aging](http://www.obrieniph.ucalgary.ca/aging)  
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# MESSAGE FROM THE ACADEMIC LEAD



**Dr. Jayna Holroyd-Leduc**  
**Academic Lead**

The Brenda Strafford Centre on Aging (BSCoA) updated our Vision and Mission statements at the start of the year, which led to the development and implementation of our new 5-year Strategic Plan. This included leading and supporting research and scholarship activities focused on (i) using technology and innovation to rethink facility-based continuing care, (ii) transdisciplinary approaches to aging, and (iii) increasing the age-friendliness of UCalgary and the City of Calgary. This annual report highlights several of these activities.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between UCalgary and The Brenda Strafford Foundation (BSF) with the aim of developing a collaborative relationship to advance aging research, education, and innovations through the BSCoA, extending beyond the original gift agreement.

The BSCoA continued to collaborate with and support researchers and other stakeholders from across Alberta and beyond on a number of novel research initiatives focused on improving quality of care and quality of life for older Canadians. We also led and collaborated on educational activities aligned with our priority areas. I hope you enjoy reading our 2023-24 annual report.

# VISION

Optimal health and well-being for older adults driven by evidence and in an inclusive manner.

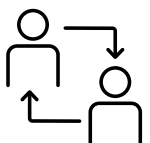
# MISSION

To create an ecosystem for innovation in age-inclusive environments, practices, and policies. We will catalyze networks and lead collaborative innovations centred on older adults through education, research, and community engagement.

# VALUES



**Inclusivity** – working with compassion, integrity, and humility to promote an age-positive and age-inclusive culture guided by the needs and interests of diverse older adults.



**Collaboration**– establishing intergenerational, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral partnerships to build capacity in education and research in the field of aging.



**Innovation**– developing and translating evidence on age-inclusive environments, practices, and policies to improve the health and well-being of older adults, in a sustainable manner.



**Leaders**– being recognized as a valuable hub within our institution, our community, and beyond for catalyzing networks and advancing innovations to better serve the aging population.

# ABOUT THE CENTRE

The BSCoA is a strategic collaboration between UCalgary and BSF. The Centre was established to enhance the health and well-being of older adults and inform public policy pertaining to the older adult population by coordinating and advancing UCalgary's work in the area of aging. The BSCoA is a cross-faculty aging hub embedded in the O'Brien Institute for Public Health (OIPH) within the Cumming School of Medicine. The physical home of the Centre is at Cambridge Manor, a continuing care community operated by BSF in the University District.

## Staff

### Academic Lead

- 0.2 FTE
- Funded by UCalgary academic salary

### Manager

- 1.0 FTE

### Research Coordinator

- 1.0 FTE
- Funded by the BSF Chair in Geriatric Medicine

### Project Coordinator

- 1.0 FTE

### Communications & Events Coordinator

- 0.6 FTE

## Advisory Committee

### Co-Chairs:

- Scientific Director, OIPH
- Academic Lead, BSCoA

### Donor Representatives:

- President & CEO, BSF
- Vice-President, Service Excellence, Quality & Innovation, BSF

### Faculty Representatives (Dean or Delegate):

- Medicine
- Kinesiology
- Nursing
- Social Work

### Non-Voting Members:

- Administrative Director, OIPH
- Manager, BSCoA

# Priority 1: Rethinking Facility-Based Continuing Care

To demonstrate leadership in rethinking facility-based continuing care by establishing an experiential ecosystem for innovation.

## Annual Highlights

- Developed and implemented a research review process to better coordinate academic research within BSF's continuing care sites.
- Supported a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Alberta Health funded research project related to implementation and evaluation of a frailty pathway within continuing care (Drs. Zahra Goodarzi & Jayna Holroyd-Leduc).
- Supported a BSF Chair in Geriatric Medicine and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded research project that explored robotic pets and social interactions within continuing care (Dr. Ann Toohey), which has led to a follow-up master's thesis project (Brooklynn Fernandes; Supervisors: Drs. Ann Toohey & Jayna Holroyd-Leduc).
- Supported two pilot projects funded by the BSF Chair in Geriatric Medicine that were conducted at continuing care sites and focused on outdoor access and garden program initiatives (Drs. Sonya Jakubec & Dallas Seitz) and community engagement within a Caboodle pop-up park (Dr. Sonya Jakubec).
- Supported a CIHR team grant application for strengthening the health workforce for system transformation entitled, "Creating System Transformation by Strengthening the Mental Health of the Long-Term Care Health Workforce: An Innovative Solution to Mitigating the Impact of Moral Injury" (Drs. Linda Duffett-Leger, Jayna Holroyd-Leduc, Zahra Goodarzi, Bonnie Lashewicz, & Gwen McGhan).
- Presented on rethinking continuing care at the "Alberta 2023 Health System Challenges and Opportunities Town Hall" hosted by the Centre for Health Policy.
- Presented on rethinking continuing care at the "Future of Aging Café: Innovation and Collaboration" event sponsored by SE Health and J5.

# Priority 1: Rethinking Facility-Based Continuing Care

## Implementation of a Patient-Centred Clinical Care Pathway for Older Adults with Frailty in Long-Term Care

With age, many individuals experience medical and functional problems. This, in combination with other factors, can lead to an increased vulnerability to adverse health outcomes known as frailty. Frailty is measured on a continuum from managing well to being completely dependent on others for care. It is common among those living in long-term care. When frailty is not recognized early, it can be harder to manage and slow progression; thus, a standardized approach to identifying and managing frailty is necessary for providing optimal care.

Using surveys and interviews with long-term care residents, caregivers, and healthcare providers, the research team co-led by Drs. Zahra Goodarzi and Jayna Holroyd-Leduc aimed to identify knowledge gaps about caring for those experiencing frailty, and to gain insight into how to overcome these challenges.



Dr. Zahra Goodarzi

The results of this CIHR and Alberta Health funded research emphasized the importance of identifying the degree of frailty and on providing person-centred care. Early and responsive conversations among residents, caregivers, and healthcare providers are also necessary for optimal care planning. Additionally, knowledge gaps about palliative and end-of-life care options were identified.

Study findings informed the development of a standard approach to help long-term care residents experiencing frailty, which is currently being implemented in BSF long-term care sites, as well as Bethany Care seniors centres in Calgary.

# Priority 1: Rethinking Facility-Based Continuing Care

## Forging Human-Animal Bonds? Robotic Pets in Care Settings for People Living with Dementia

In 2018, Ageless Innovation LLC introduced Joy For All® animatronic (“robotic”) cats and dogs. These accessible, affordable devices have since gained popularity as a therapeutic tool for people living with dementia. Responding to this new practice, this study addressed gaps in knowledge by working with a recreation therapy team immersed in a long-term care setting to investigate practical considerations when introducing robotic pets into their programming. The interdisciplinary research team, led by Dr. Ann Toohey, included a partnership with BSF continuing care communities.

Overall, this study helped enhance the effectiveness of using robotic pets within care settings by informing practice to optimize care delivery, enhance social dynamics related to the devices, and help shape positive therapeutic responses of residents. Findings were shared broadly through presentations to local, regional, and national audiences and a manuscript is under development for peer review.



A continuing care resident with Taco, a robotic dog

This project was supported by the BSCoA, the BSF Chair in Geriatric Medicine, SSHRC, and Alberta Health Services Provincial Seniors Health & Continuing Care.



# Priority 1: Rethinking Facility-Based Continuing Care

## Facilitating Activity Through Outdoor Access and Garden Program Initiatives in Continuing Care: An Ethnographic Study

Outdoor environments and activities such as gardening are found to encourage a range of movement, social connection, sensory awareness, and meaning making. Recreation teams responsible for delivering activity and leisure programming influence overall rates of physical activity and social opportunities for residents living in continuing care settings.

A pilot study co-led by Drs. Sonya Jakubec and Dallas Seitz was conducted at BSF's Cambridge Manor to identify the impacts, barriers, and facilitators to participating in a gardening program at a long-term care site.



Continuing care residents enjoying gardening

Findings from field observations and interviews with residents, caregivers, volunteers, and staff revealed that everyone in the program is a "gardener." A sense of a garden party took hold, where residents and staff were both guest and host, receiving from the garden and gaining a sense of accomplishment.

This project was supported by the BSCoA and the BSF Chair in Geriatric Medicine.

# Priority 2: Transdisciplinary Aging Research and Scholarship

To catalyze transdisciplinary aging research and scholarship with a focus on creating age-inclusive innovations, environments, practices, and policies that also consider intersecting health inequities.

## Annual Highlights

- In partnership with AGE-WELL, awarded one master's and one doctoral scholarship for aging studies and research (Recipients: Maureen O'Brien & Natalia Docteur). Awarded an additional doctoral scholarship through UCalgary's graduate award competition (Recipient: Daranne Harris).
- Co-developed monthly Geriatric Research Works-In-Progress Rounds for students, research staff, and faculty with the Division of Geriatric Medicine.
- Supported and participated in an inclusive governance research project to incorporate an aging perspective (Dr. Aleem Bharwani).
- Collaborated on a transdisciplinary connector grant application focused on facilitating active aging in and through dance (Drs. Pil Hansen & Sarah Kenny).
- Collaborated on a VPR catalyst grant application focused on developing a golf program for people living with dementia and their care partners (Dr. Meghan McDonough).
- Provided five letters of support for competitive aging-related funding applications (Drs. Linda Duffett-Leger, Bin Hu, Lara Nixon, Dallas Seitz, & Marcello Tonelli). To date, projects led by Dr. Lara Nixon ("Promoting Equity with Older People with Experiences of Homelessness: Exchanging Knowledges, Mapping Systems, and Planning for Next Steps") and Dr. Marcello Tonelli ("Using Patient-Provider Communication Tools to Improve Hospital Care for Patients with Hearing Loss") have been successfully funded.
- Provided one letter of support for the BSF's New Horizons for Seniors Program grant application.
- Hosted the CIHR Institute of Aging in Calgary for their "Engaging on Aging" strategic plan tour.

# Priority 2: Transdisciplinary Aging Research and Scholarship

## Student Scholarships & Awards

### Maureen O'Brien

Supervisors: Drs. Ranita Manocha and Cheryl Barnabe

### Evaluation of an App-Based Walker Fitting and Gait Training Education Program for Older Adults

Over one-third of Canadians aged 75 and older use walking aids such as canes, crutches, and walkers to improve their mobility and balance. However, walking aids may result in upper body pain, injury, and increased risk of falling. These risks likely increase when walking aid users are not properly fit with their devices or trained on how to use them. To address this, the research team has developed a video-based interactive mobile application known as, Improving Canadians' Walking Aid Skills, Learning, and Knowledge© (ICanWALK©). The ICanWALK© app allows users to select a specific skill related to fitting or walking with their walking aid and watch an instructional video on that skill. They then videotape themselves while performing the skill and compare it using a series of assessment questions. In this study, after using the ICanWALK© app twice, participants experienced a 13% increase in balance confidence. Furthermore, feedback from participants has been promising, with many finding the app easy to use and understand. Participants have also reported an improvement in their overall mobility. The ultimate goal is to make the ICanWALK© app available to all Canadians, increasing the accessibility of walking aid training, and improving mobility for older adults.

# Priority 2: Transdisciplinary Aging Research and Scholarship

## Student Scholarships & Awards

### **Natalia Docteur**

Supervisor: Dr. Brandy Callahan

#### **Investigating Memory On Hand as a Wearable Technology Device for Memory Augmentation: A Feasibility and Acceptability Study in Older Adults with Cognitive Complaints**

Millions of Canadian older adults experience a perceived change in their thinking and memory abilities, or subjective cognitive complaints. Subjective cognitive complaints often trigger increased worry and decreased confidence in thinking abilities, and these factors can negatively impact quality of life. Cognitive training is an effective method for strengthening memory and delaying future cognitive decline, however, many older adults struggle to apply these techniques on their own. Memory On Hand is a wearable technology device designed to support memory strategy use in everyday environments. The digital memory augmentation tool employs an empirically supported 'spaced retrieval' method to scaffold strategy use. The purpose of this study is to examine the feasibility and acceptability of Memory On Hand for older adults with subjective cognitive complaints living in the community. Participants will test the device over one week in everyday environments and answer questions about their experiences. Findings will produce new information on wearer's satisfaction, engagement, and perceived helpfulness of the device to inform future product development and efficacy research. The hope is that Memory On Hand will provide an innovative and accessible technology-based solution to boost confidence in cognitive abilities and promote cognitive health in older adults.

# Priority 2: Transdisciplinary Aging Research and Scholarship

## Student Scholarships & Awards

### Daranne Harris

Supervisor: Dr. Shane Sinclair

#### **A Grounded Theory of Healthcare Providers' Experiences of Awe and Practice of Compassion in Residential Care**

Though continuing care residents and their families express the importance of compassion, feedback indicates this is not consistently experienced in the care environment. It is also apparent that healthcare providers do not go unscathed in providing care. Attending to the multi-dimensional needs of residents stretches them physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. The need to understand and sustain compassion is paramount. Literature suggests that awe, an elevating experience of wonder, has a direct correlation to prosocial behaviour like compassion. However, there is little research into experiences of awe in modern healthcare and its impact on compassion, or its relationship to healthcare provider well-being, which is known to impact the quality of care given. This research aims to explore the relationship between healthcare providers' experiences of awe and their practice of compassion in continuing care. Grounded theory is ideal for exploring nascent areas of research focused on social interactions. Through semi-structured interviews, this research will elicit healthcare providers' experiences of awe and how these inform compassion. Research findings about the nature of awe, the process and conditions under which it occurs, and its effects on compassion will provide insight to enhance compassion and increase the quality of life of both staff and residents.

# Priority 2: Transdisciplinary Aging Research and Scholarship

## Geriatric Research Works-In-Progress Rounds

Held monthly, these rounds feature presentations on geriatric and aging-related topics from faculty, research staff, and students. They provide a forum for students to share information about their research projects in progress and receive feedback from knowledgeable faculty and research staff.

## CIHR Institute of Aging Engaging on Aging Tour

The CIHR Institute of Aging developed a new 5-year Strategic Plan with the goal of advancing training, research, and knowledge mobilization to maintain and improve the health and well-being of all Canadians as they age. The BSCoA co-hosted an event with the Institute in which Scientific Director, Dr. Jane Rylett, shared with the Calgary community priorities for research on aging as part of their cross-Canada tour.



# Priority 3: Age-Friendliness of the University of Calgary and City of Calgary

To enhance the age-friendliness of UCalgary and the City of Calgary, including addressing ageism and promoting age-inclusivity.

## Annual Highlights

- Completed data analysis for our research project that assessed UCalgary's age-friendliness.
- Contributed to the Age-Friendly Calgary Steering Committee's research and educational initiatives focused on reducing barriers to the participation of older adults in winter.
- Presented on our experience using a new research instrument to assess age-friendliness in a Canadian post-secondary context at the "Canadian Association on Gerontology" conference.
- Presented on the impact of ageism within healthcare and society at the "Shades of Grey" virtual conference hosted by Alberta Health Services.
- Presented on strategies for healthy aging to the Hounsfield Heights-Briar Hill Community Association.
- Supervised a graduate student who participated in the Cumming School of Medicine's Professional Development and Experiential Learning Program (Freda Okoma).
- Hosted a "Careers in Aging" event at UCalgary to raise awareness about diverse career possibilities and paths in the field of aging.
- Co-hosted the Cumming School of Medicine's "Science in the Cinema" film screening.
- Sponsored the "2023 Healthy Aging Alberta Summit" in Calgary.
- Sponsored the "2024 THIRD ACTION Film Festival" in Calgary.

# Priority 3: Age-Friendliness of the University of Calgary and City of Calgary

## Canadian Association on Gerontology Conference

Post-secondary institutions belonging to the Age-Friendly University Global Network are committed to improving the inclusivity of higher education environments, policies, practices, and programs for older adults. These institutions are advised to assess their age-friendliness in order to understand the extent that they are meeting the 10 Age-Friendly University guiding principles. The BSCoA selected a comprehensive research instrument developed in the United States - the Age-Friendly Inventory and Campus Climate Survey - to assess UCalgary's age-friendliness. As the first research team to use this instrument in a Canadian context, we shared our experience adapting and administering the tool with other researchers at the 2023 Canadian Association on Gerontology conference in Toronto.

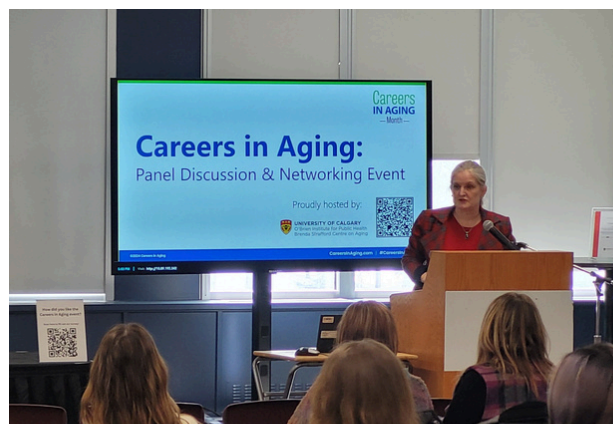




# Priority 3: Age-Friendliness of the University of Calgary and City of Calgary

## Careers in Aging Event

People are living longer and populations are aging worldwide, increasing the demand for professionals in aging. In alignment with Careers in Aging Month, the BSCoA hosted a panel discussion and networking event to raise awareness of diverse career possibilities and paths in the field of aging among UCalgary undergraduate and graduate students.



Dr. Jayna Holroyd-Leduc, event moderator

The planning of the event was supported by Freda Okoma who completed an internship with the BSCoA as part of her participation in the Cumming School of Medicine's Professional Development and Experiential Learning Program.



Panelists from left to right: Dr. Zahra Goodarzi, Holly Gruszecki, Samantha Porter, Lisa Stebbins, and Dr. Chantelle Zimmer



Freda Okoma, BSCoA student intern

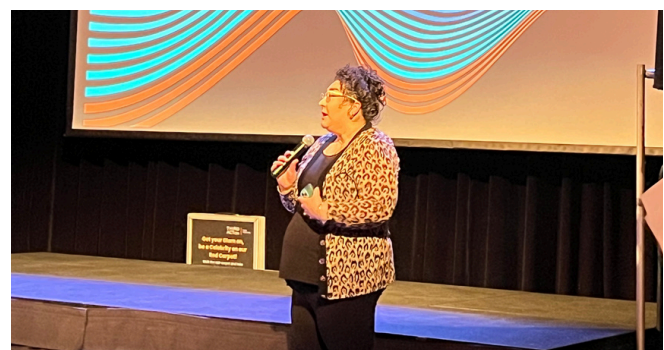
# Priority 3: Age-Friendliness of the University of Calgary and City of Calgary

## THIRD ACTION Film Festival

The BSCoA sponsored the 2024 THIRD ACTION Film Festival, which aims to guide an age-positive cultural shift through film and film-based events that offer an entertaining and educational experience that redefines the narrative around aging. The \$1,000 sponsorship supported a “Resiliency in Aging Award” given to the film entry that best represented resilience as an asset-focused framing of older age. The winner of the film award was “Pacing the Pool,” which provides a glimpse into the life of Richard Pace who has been living with a disability. To Richard, water is a source of physical and mental healing that enables him to overcome challenges later in life. The BSCoA also coordinated a discussion with an expert in dementia (Dr. Zahra Goodarzi) after the screening of the film “Keys Bags Names Words” at the festival.



Dr. Chantelle Zimmer presenting the resiliency in aging award



Dr. Zahra Goodarzi responding to audience questions about “Keys Bags Names Words”

# FINANCES

Statement of Income	April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024
<b>Revenues</b>	
BSF Operating (Includes Surplus)	\$733,696.01
Geriatric Endowment Interest	\$11,100.00
Other	\$4,064.63
<b>Expenses</b>	
Salaries & Benefits	\$229,384.15
Operating	\$17,602.80
Research & Education	\$19,345.73
Funding Programs	\$98,734.90
Events	\$1,788.97
Conferences	\$1,739.92
Sponsorships	\$2,000.00

Note: Expenses covered by the BSF Chair in Geriatric Medicine are not included in the table above.

# Contact

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**[aging@ucalgary.ca](mailto:aging@ucalgary.ca)**



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