

Geriatric Health Care



What's the issue?

Canada's population is aging. In 2012, almost one in seven Canadians was a senior. Now the number is more than one in six. By 2030, that will jump to nearly one in four. Our health care system (and social systems) needs to re-think how to address the rising needs of this huge demographic. The health system, too, has tended to be oriented to deal with acute care, not for the chronic needs of seniors. The system has also been hospital-based, with less focus on home care and community-based care.

Some challenges

GERIATRIC TRAINING: Canada faces a shortage of geriatricians. Over the next two decades, the numbers of Canadians aged 65-plus will double, and those 85 and over will quadruple. Yet there are only about 300 geriatricians working in Canada (half of those in Ontario). We need to graduate more specialists, but the number geriatric specialization is capped. Beyond that, a wide range of health care professionals, from pharmacists to occupational therapists, work with older adults all the time. They need increased training on serving the seniors population.

HEALTHY AGING: Healthy aging encompasses active lifestyles, social inclusion, mental health, age-friendly communities and coping with change. Yet care, services and policies for seniors can often focus more narrowly on physical health.

LONG-TERM CARE: The number of seniors, and longer lifespans, are creating multiple pressures on LTC. There's a shortage of spaces, a shortage of personal support workers, and those arriving in LTC often require more extensive support.

ELDER ABUSE: Up to 10% of seniors experience some form of elder abuse - physical, psychological, emotional, financial - each year. Still, the awareness of the issue, and resources available to prevent abuse and help victims, remain lacking.



Questions for politicians

- How can we better meet the ongoing and often complex care needs of seniors, in hospital and in the community?
- What sort of geriatric training should be mandatory across health care?
- What are your public policy priorities to boost the overall well-being of seniors?
- What human resources, structural or funding changes can increase the capacity of long-term care?
- How should we invest in serving the victims and raising the profile of elder abuse?