



# Strengthening Geriatric Capacity in Ontario's Health Workforce: Results of a Provincial Training Needs Assessment to Support Specialized Geriatric Services (C163)

Stacey A. Hawkins\* MA, CPG, CRP, PhD (c)

Director – Research and Evaluation, Seniors Care Network (Ontario, Canada)

Adjunct Professor and PhD Student, Faculty of Health Sciences, Ontario Tech University (Ontario, Canada)

\*Conflict of Interest Disclosure: None to declare

# Background

- The growth of Ontario's (Canada) older adult population living with frailty continues to outpace system capacity<sup>1</sup>
- Inconsistent geriatric content and core professional content in core training programs for many regulated and non-regulated health professions<sup>2</sup>
- Comprehensive geriatric assessment (CGA) requires specialized competencies most often acquired through post-professional development<sup>3</sup>
- Limited access to continuing professional development (CPD) and skilled clinician shortages<sup>4</sup>

1 Canadian Frailty Network (CFN), n.d.; Hoover et al., 2013

2 Andrew & Shea, 2010; Bardach & Rowles, 2012; Fox et al., 2016; Hawkins et al., 2023

3 Donahue et al., 2011; Kay et al., 2017

4 Borrie et al., 2020; Hawkins, 2014

# Methods

- **Purpose:** To understand the training needs of clinicians/healthcare professionals who work with older adults in the province of Ontario to inform workforce planning and guide CPD development.
- **Method:** online, provincial (Ontario, Canada) training needs assessment (TNA) survey of:<sup>1</sup>
  - 1) clinicians/healthcare professionals who work in specialized geriatric services (SGS); and
  - 2) non-SGS healthcare providers who work with older adults
- **Data:** demographics, qualifications, and self-assessment of competence (5-point Likert scale) based on the Interprofessional CGA Competency Framework<sup>2</sup>
- **Sample Size:** 203 clinicians (SGS clinicians n=107; non-SGS providers n=96), with representation across health professions, and all health regions



# Results - Quantitative

| Practice Area                                  | Non-SGS<br>MEAN Score /5 | SGS<br>MEAN Score /5 |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Core Geriatric Knowledge                       | 3.31                     | 3.75                 |
| Screening, Assessment, and Risk Identification | 3.59                     | 3.92                 |
| Analysis and Interpretation                    | 3.39                     | 3.86                 |
| Care Planning and Intervention                 | 3.59                     | 3.91                 |
| Interprofessional Practice                     | 3.70                     | 3.96                 |
| Professional Practice                          | 3.94                     | 3.98                 |

# Results - Qualitative

## Knowledge:

- Recognizing delirium and other acute changes + differentiating
- Understanding mental health conditions (including psychiatric conditions, substance use) and management in the geriatric population
- Pathophysiology + clinical presentation in geriatric population
- Medications and aging

## Skills:

- Culture and gender-sensitive care
- Differentiation of different types of dementias
- Communication skills, including ax. with persons with language barriers (e.g. verbal and non-verbal)
- Supportive decision-making

## Modalities:

- Fellowship or mentorship program (e.g. experience-building with novice clinicians)

# Conclusions

- Opportunities to build **core geriatric knowledge** with non-SGS clinicians, as well as providing **skill-building** CPD in areas such as: (1) patient, care partner, and interprofessional communication; (2) management of behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia; (3) goal-setting; (4) care planning
- expressed a desire for CPD that explicitly aims as building skills and experience, such as fellowships or mentorships that leverages the expertise of experienced clinicians in the field.
- Both SGS and non-SGS providers described the need to build skills in interprofessional practice and teamwork, including opportunities to learn new clinical skills from clinicians in other professions (e.g. interpreting labs, conducting assessments, and etc.).
- Urgent need for structured CPD (e.g. mentorship programs), and training frameworks to guide implementation.

# Acknowledgements

We are immensely grateful to the clinicians who participated in this training needs assessment, and who continue to promote reflective practice within the Region. We are also grateful to the strong network of specialized geriatric services administrators and administrative support professionals who continue to facilitate evaluation and research activities with the clinical teams. Thank you for your continued trust and belief in the work that we do. A special thank you to Dr. Kelly Kay and Dr. Winnie Sun for their advice and support.

## References

- Andrew, Melissa H., and Catherine Shea. 2010. "Geriatric Psychiatry Education in Canada: The Pathway to Subspecialty Recognition." *International Psychogeriatrics* 22 (6): 919–26. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1041610210000414>
- Bardach, Shoshana H., and Graham D. Rowles. 2012. "Geriatric Education in the Health Professions: Are We Making Progress?" *The Gerontologist* 52 (5): 607–18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gns006>
- Borrie, Michael, Tracy Cooper, Monisha Basu, Kelly Kay, Jeanette C. Prorok, and Dallas Seitz. 2020. "Ontario Geriatric Specialist Physician Resources 2018." *Canadian Geriatrics Journal: CGJ* 23 (3): 219–27. <https://doi.org/10.5770/cgj.23.448>.
- Canadian Frailty Network (CFN). n.d. "Frailty Matters: A Growing Health System Challenge." Canadian Frailty Network. n.d. <https://www.cfn-nce.ca/frailty-matters/>.
- Donahue, Moreen, Meredith Wallace Kazer, Lisa Smith, and Joyce J. Fitzpatrick. 2011. "Effect of a Geriatric Nurse Education Program on the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Certification of Hospital Nurses." *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing* 42 (8): 360–64. <https://doi.org/10.3928/00220124-20110415-01>.
- Fox, Mary T., Jeffrey I. Butler, Malini Persaud, Deborah Tregunno, Souraya Sidani, and Hugh McCague. 2016. "A Multi-Method Study of the Geriatric Learning Needs of Acute Care Hospital Nurses in Ontario, Canada: NURSES' GERIATRICS LEARNING NEEDS." *Research in Nursing & Health* 39 (1): 66–76. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21699>.
- Hawkins, S.A., Ehsan, S., & Burkitt, J.J. (2023). Evaluating the training needs of interprofessional teams working in specialized geriatric services. *Perspectives: Journal of the Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association*, 44(3), 615. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376751517\\_Evaluating\\_the\\_Training\\_Needs\\_of\\_Interprofessional\\_Teams\\_Working\\_in\\_Specialized\\_Geriatric\\_Services](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376751517_Evaluating_the_Training_Needs_of_Interprofessional_Teams_Working_in_Specialized_Geriatric_Services)
- Kay, K., Hawkins, S.A. Day, A.M.B., Briscoe, M., Daly, D. & Wong, K. 2017. "A Competency Framework for Interprofessional Comprehensive Geriatric Assessment." Ontario: Regional Geriatric Programs (RGP) of Ontario. <https://rgps.on.ca/resources/a-competency-framework-for-interprofessional-comprehensive-geriatric-assessment/>