

# Strengthening Specialized Geriatric Services: A Provider Experience Evaluation in Central East Ontario, Canada

Authors: Xin Yi Dong<sup>i</sup>, Sabeen Ehsan<sup>ii</sup> & Stacey A. Hawkins<sup>iii</sup>

<sup>i</sup>Seniors Care Network

<sup>ii</sup>Ontario Tech University

Sabeen Ehsan: No conflict of interest



## Background

Central East (CE) Ontario is home to ~51,000 older adults living with complex health conditions such as frailty and dementia.<sup>1</sup> Specialized Geriatric Services (SGS) providers play an important role in supporting the health and social needs of this vulnerable population. Over the last 5 years the health care system has experienced unprecedented challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the mass exodus of seasoned clinicians from Ontario's workforce.<sup>2</sup> The increasing health needs of the aging population are also contributing to resource shortages and increased SGS demands.<sup>2</sup> These trends are having negative impacts on providers' wellbeing. Led by Seniors Care Network, this evaluation presents an analysis of SGS providers' experience in CE Ontario and suggested action priorities at micro, meso, and system-level.

## Approach

A mixed-methods approach was used, including the development and distribution of a comprehensive 50-question provider experience survey. The survey covered 10 distinct domains e.g., professional development, care coordination, moral distress, burnout, equity, diversity & inclusion (EDI), workplace violence, etc. Semi-structured interviews with senior leaders/executives from local and provincial organizations were also conducted. Quantitative survey data was analyzed statistically, and qualitative interview data was analyzed thematically to identify strengths, challenges and recommendations for host organizations and policy makers.

## Results

A total of 62 survey responses were received, and five semi-structured interviews were completed. Key findings<sup>3</sup> included:

### Areas of Strength

#### Team Collaboration

Providers confirmed strong team collaborations with positive communication and support:

- **87%** understand the roles and responsibilities of other team members
- **80%** team members show trust towards each other.

#### Empowered in Decision-Making

Providers feel empowered to participate in decision-making processes, indicating a culture of shared responsibility:

- **80%** feel they can participate in decision-making regarding their work (flexibility regarding work schedule, hours, assigned activities).

#### Confidence in Care

There is a high level of self-reported confidence in delivering high-quality older adult care:

- **75%** feel they have the tools/resources they need to do their job effectively.

### Areas of Improvements

#### Training and Development Opportunities

While providers express the desire for more training and development opportunities, majority are satisfied with existing training and resources provided:

- **64%** satisfied with ongoing training/education
- **64%** think they have the support and resources needed to develop and achieve career goals.

#### Burnout & Moral Distress

There is an elevated levels of burnout and moral distress due to increased workload and insufficient human and financial resources:

- **66%** are experiencing or are at high risk of burnout
- **49%** are experiencing or are at high risk of moral distress.

#### Discrimination from Patients & Caregivers

Providers report discrimination from patients and caregivers:

- **31%** experienced discrimination from patients and caregivers due to gender, age, professional designation, or race or ethnicity.

### Proposed Strategies

#### Health System Level

1. Increase investments in Geriatrics.
2. Alternative funding plans to facilitate effective resources utilization professional training opportunities.
3. Expansion of structured professional training opportunities.
4. Development of a comprehensive older adult strategy.

#### Seniors Care Network (SGS coordinating body)

1. Advocate for older adult priorities.
2. Mobilize knowledge exchange.
3. Enhance local clinical capacity.
4. Facilitate system-wide cohesion among SGS partners.

#### Host Organization Level

1. Prioritize staff well-being through flexible scheduling.
2. Provide comprehensive benefits, and EDI training & support.

Macro

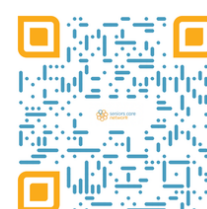
Meso

Micro

### Implications

This evaluation provides critical insights into SGS provider experience in Central East Ontario, informing capacity planning and strategies for organizational and governmental action to improve specialized geriatric service delivery and workforce sustainability.

Visit Our Site



#### Citations

<sup>1</sup>Provincial Geriatrics Leadership Ontario. Frailty estimates. Provincial Geriatrics Leadership Ontario; 2023.

<sup>2</sup>Dong, X. & Ehsan, S. Provider Experience in Specialized Geriatric Services: Final Evaluation Report. Seniors Care Network; 2024.

<sup>3</sup>Dong, X. & Ehsan, S. Provider Experience in Specialized Geriatric Services: Final Evaluation Report. Seniors Care Network; 2024.