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**USING TECHNOLOGY TO MAKE  
THE DAY-TO-DAY LIVES OF  
OLDER ADULTS SAFER: THE  
2011/2012 CAH  
DISTINGUISHED LECTURE**

On November 24, 2011, the University of Regina Centre on Aging and Health hosted its annual Distinguished Lecture. This year's speaker was Dr. Geoff Fernie, a distinguished biomedical engineer with the University of Toronto and the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute. The lecture was well attended and garnered much media attention.

Much of the lecture focused on positive aging and how technology can be used to keep older adults living in their own homes longer, while staying safe, active, and able to fulfill family responsibilities.

Some of the particular innovations Fernie addressed included solutions for making staircases safer; new designs for footwear that reduce the chances of slips and falls; redesigning curbs on city streets; keeping older adults driving longer and safer; easy-to-assemble railings to increase mobility around the home; as well as an electronic and computerized assistance and safety system.

Fernie also discussed inventions for health care and caregiving in the form of hand-washing technologies, affordable sleep apnea diagnosis technologies, and inventions for moving patients with limited mobility, to name just a few.

(Continued on page 7)



Dr. Geoff Fernie

## CAH MEMBER WINS ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF CANADA SCHOLARSHIP

We are pleased to announce that CAH Trainee Member Heather Eritz has been awarded an Alzheimer Society of Canada Doctoral Scholarship for 2011. Heather will receive two years of funding (approximately \$20,000 per year).

Heather is a third-year PhD student in the clinical psychology program. She works with Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos at the Health Psychology Laboratory. Her main research interests relate to nurse empathy, personhood in dementia, and aggressive behaviours in dementia.

Her dissertation focuses on an intervention intended to decrease aggressive behaviours and increase quality of life among residents of long-term care who experience dementia. This intervention will present the life history of the individual to staff members, with the hope that providing staff with information about that resident will increase empathy toward the resident and the perception of that resident's personhood. She expects that these

alterations will lead to a change in how care is provided to these residents, thus decreasing aggressive behaviours and increasing quality of life.

Heather hopes her dissertation findings will provide support for an inexpensive intervention. If such an intervention is determined to be effective, it could be used in long-term care facilities to help increase the quality of life of residents with dementia.

Heather is honoured to be funded by the Alzheimer Society of Canada: "The society is dedicated to improving the lives of those living with dementia, and I hope that this research will contribute to that goal."



Heather Eritz

## CAH SPONSORS AGING BRAIN LECTURE AT CURAC CONFERENCE

On May 12, 2011, the CAH sponsored a talk by Dr. Max Cynader, Director of the Brain Research Centre at Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute and UBC & Canada Research Chair in Brain Development.

Cynader's lecture, "The Aging Brain," discussed the public policy implications of brain research and the need to conduct necessary research to help lessen the impact of often chronic brain diseases.

He also discussed physical exercise being a key to brain health and highlighted the connection between reducing stress and healthy brains. Furthermore, Cynader suggested that happiness and being emotionally and socially involved is beneficial to brain health, particularly as we age.

The lecture took place at the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada National Conference and Meeting held at the University of Regina. Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos, CAH Director, moderated the session.

## **M.A./M.Sc. GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM UPDATE: PERSPECTIVES FROM A RECENT GRADUATE AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL**

The CAH congratulates Maureen Coulthard, the most recent graduate of the University of Regina M.A./M.Sc. Program in Gerontology, on her successful thesis defense. She was supervised by Dr. David Malloy.

Coulthard's thesis, *Caregivers of Individuals with Alzheimer's Disease—Personal Hardiness and Perception of Personhood*, arose from her interest in variables that may influence the caregiving experience for family members who are primary caregivers of individuals with Alzheimer's disease.

She believes an improved understanding of these variables has the potential to reveal opportunities to positively influence the process and outcome for both the caregiver and care recipient. She believes her work will have practical applications in that her findings may entice health professionals to consider hardiness and the preservation of personhood in their assessment, care plan, and in the development of resources to support caregivers.

Coulthard's career in occupational therapy has spanned clinical, academic, research and administrative realms. She is currently the Manager of Orthotics Prosthetics

Department at Wascana Rehabilitation Centre in Regina, SK.

Coulthard said that there is value in programs like the M.A./M.Sc. Gerontology Program because they allow one to pursue a range of interests from the perspective of the individual's professional designation and career focus—be that direct client care, administration, academia, or policy.

She notes that the gerontology program provides a framework for personal and professional growth and "a heightened appreciation for the commonality of challenges experienced by the range of health professionals and services for seniors in Saskatchewan."

Since graduating, Coulthard has had the opportunity to present her findings at the Canadian Association on Gerontology Conference and she is in the process of drafting an article for publication.



Maureen Coulthard

**More information on the M.A./M.Sc. Program in Gerontology is available on the CAH Website or by contacting Dr. Darren Candow, Gerontology Program Coordinator, at [Darren.Candow@uregina.ca](mailto:Darren.Candow@uregina.ca)**

## **CAH CO-SPONSORS 10TH ANNUAL UNIVERSITY OF REGINA LIFELONG LEARNING CENTRE GERONTOLOGY INSTITUTE**

On November 24, 2011, the CAH co-sponsored the Lifelong Learning Centre (LLC) 10th Annual Gerontology Institute. This year's theme was "Life, Learning, Longevity" and featured plenary speakers, interactive workshops, and presentations delivered by experts about living long, healthy lives. Health professionals, those working in community programs, private care homes, long-term care facilities, and hospitals, as well as older adults, and academics learned about many issues of concern to seniors in Saskatchewan including palliative and end-of-life care, emergency medical services and older adults, oral care, chronic disease self-management, dealing with loss, and other topics.

The CAH sponsored the keynote speaker, Dr. Susan Whiting, Professor of Nutrition & Dietetics, University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Whiting discussed vitamin D and its health benefits beyond bone health, particularly how evidence suggests that vitamin D can help improve balance.

Since its inception, the CAH has co-sponsored the LLC Gerontology Institute annually and we plan on continuing this worthwhile sponsorship.

For more information on the LLC Gerontology Institute, contact the LLC at 306.585.5816 or by email at [lifelong@uregina.ca](mailto:lifelong@uregina.ca). Their website is [www.uregina.ca/cce/lifelong](http://www.uregina.ca/cce/lifelong).

## **Volunteers Needed**

Participants are needed for a study of nutrition and balance.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to complete a variety of tests of your balance, as well as provide some background on your health history.

**If you are age 65-74 and healthy, we would like to hear from you!**

**Transportation and Parking can be arranged.**

**For more information, please contact: [Falls.Prevention@uregina.ca](mailto:Falls.Prevention@uregina.ca)**

**Tel: (306) 337-3330**

University  
of Regina

Centre for Exercise and Nutrition in Falls & Aging Research

## **RESEARCH REPORT: UTILIZATION OF SPIRITUALITY TRAINING FOR SOCIAL WORKERS ASSISTING OLDER ADULT CLIENTS IN A HOSPICE CARE SETTING—A HERMENEUTICAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH**

Social workers in a hospice care setting are presented with many challenges. They are not only confronted by the common stressors associated with death and dying, but also with existential concerns of the patients and their families.

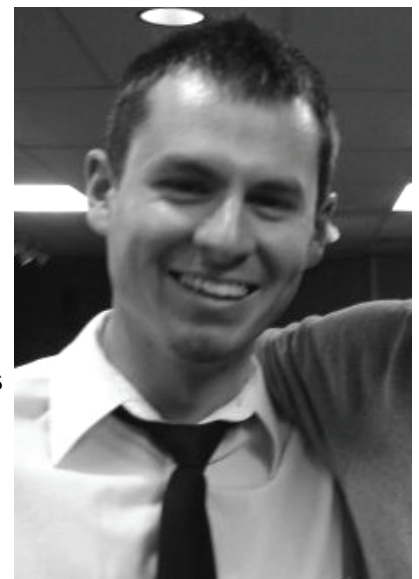
Typically, social workers outnumber spiritual advisors or chaplains in a hospice care unit, and therefore have more frequent exposure to the spiritual needs of patients. As an older patient approaches end of life, the notions of religion and spirituality can take on a more significant role in their acceptance of mortality. However, social workers have reported reluctance in addressing the spiritual matters of their patients and are ill equipped to deal with these issues. Spirituality training seminars have been linked with significant improvements in self-perceived compassion for the dying, compassion for oneself, and reduced workplace stress.

Therefore, the proposed research goal is to describe the nature of palliative care social workers utilizing spiritual training when assisting their older clients.

The current study, being completed under the supervision of Dr. David Malloy, will employ a hermeneutic phenomenological research approach to explore the experience of 5 social workers in a local hospice care setting utilizing spirituality training with their older clients. A secondary goal of this study is to define and describe the nature of spirituality as social workers conceive of it today.

The conclusions of this research will help to illuminate how novel spiritual training exercises are implemented in practice, as well as provide a better understanding of how spiritual education could be integrated into the post-secondary social work curriculum .

For more information on Michael's research, email him at [mikegoldberg@shaw.ca](mailto:mikegoldberg@shaw.ca).



Michael Goldberg

## **RESEARCH REPORT: AN EFFICACY TRIAL OF THERAPIST-ASSISTED INTERNET COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOUR THERAPY FOR OLDER ADULTS WITH GENERAL ANXIETY**

Generalized anxiety disorder and subclinical general anxiety are highly prevalent conditions among older adults. However, due to a lack of access to providers, mobility difficulties, and the stigma of seeking help for mental health problems, mental health concerns frequently remain undertreated in the older age group. In recent years, researchers around the world have begun studying innovative ways of delivering psychological services to reach a wider audience, including providing Cognitive-Behaviour Therapy (CBT) over the Internet with the assistance of a therapist. While this therapeutic approach has proven effective in the treatment of a number of clinical problems for young and middle-aged adults, it is unknown whether such positive results will be found when used with an older adult population.

Starting in the fall of 2011, Shannon Jones, a doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at the University of Regina, is studying the use of Online-CBT to treat general anxiety in adults aged 60 years and older from across Saskatchewan. Online-CBT presents psychoeducational materials and CBT techniques using interactive web pages and involve a therapist who provides support and direction to clients via e-mail. Online-CBT for this project is made available at [www.onlinetherapyuser.ca](http://www.onlinetherapyuser.ca) and takes about 7 weeks to complete. Eligible participants will be randomized to either receive treatment immediately or be assigned to a 10-week waitlist. Recruitment began in late November and will continue until August 2012.

The results of this study will inform researchers and clinicians about the efficacy of Online-CBT for older adults and provide insight on how to best deliver this service to this age group. Ultimately, it will help determine whether Online-CBT programs adapted for older adults should be provided more broadly across Saskatchewan and Canada.

For more information on Shannon's research, email her at [Shannon.Jones@uregina.ca](mailto:Shannon.Jones@uregina.ca). Shannon's research is supported by a CGS Doctoral Award from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.



Shannon Jones

## **CAH DISTINGUISHED LECTURE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)**

Ultimately, Fernie explained that low-technology solutions can often be just as or even more helpful than more complex, high-tech solutions. Regardless, he feels solutions simply need to be intelligent and they must be tested; tangible results are what make an idea valuable, not the idea itself. He noted that an idea is nearly worthless without proper testing and evidence of efficacy.

Dr. Fernie has a primary appointment at the University of Toronto as Professor in the Department of Surgery with cross appointments that include the Institute of Biomaterials and Biomedical Engineering, Departments of Mechanical and Industrial Engineering, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. He is a professional engineer and Institute Director for research at Toronto Rehabilitation Institute-UHN.

He has 6 commercialized products and 4 currently in clinical trials. He has helped launch 3 successful companies. He has published over 120 peer reviewed journal papers and book chapters and has 17 patents and an additional 11 filings.

Previous Distinguished Lectures have covered topics as diverse as driving in old age, pain management in older adults, ethical issues relating to the care of seniors who reside in long-term care facilities, the health of North American immigrants, strategies for preventing falls in older adults, behavioural health in late life and others.

Please visit the CAH website at [http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre\\_index.htm](http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre_index.htm) for information on previous and upcoming CAH public events.

## **CAH LAUNCHES SURVERYMONKEY PROGRAM FOR MEMBERS**

Recently, the CAH has begun offering members access to a CAH SurveyMonkey account, which we hope will encourage further research in the field of aging and health. Researchers can use the account to give surveys, questionnaires, and collect valuable data. Questionnaire material will be entered by CAH in order to maximize confidentiality as multiple researchers may be using the account simultaneously. Researchers who are interested in using the account must obtain ethics clearance for their projects from the University of Regina Ethics Board.

For the complete terms of use and additional information, go to [http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre\\_index.htm](http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre_index.htm) or call 306.337.8477. To take a tour of SurveyMonkey, visit [surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com).



The CAH newsletter is currently **accepting submissions** . Your comments, suggestions, announcements, research updates, and CAH-related news items are welcome.

**Please email submissions to:**

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CAH Administrator/  
Newsletter Editor  
[scott.j.wilson@uregina.ca](mailto:scott.j.wilson@uregina.ca)

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## Apply for the University of Regina M.A./M.Sc. Program in Gerontology

The University of Regina offers an exciting inter-disciplinary research-oriented M.A./MSc. graduate degree program in gerontology. Students with health professional degrees (e.g., nursing, physical therapy), or undergraduate degrees in disciplines such as kinesiology, psychology, social work, health studies, gerontology, sociology, and biology are encouraged to apply for the 2012 fall semester. The program, coordinated by the University of Regina's Centre on Aging and Health, involves the collaboration of the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies and the Faculty of Social Work. Students can work towards an MA or an MSc degree depending on the nature of their thesis research. The program aims to provide research training and specialized gerontology knowledge to health professionals and students wishing to pursue doctoral studies, nursing, and research careers. The program emphasizes both the physiological and psychosocial aspects of aging.

**Admission Requirements:** Applicants must have a 4-year undergraduate degree in areas such as kinesiology, psychology, social work, health studies, sociology, biology, or a health professional degree (e.g., medicine, nursing, social work). The deadline for applications is March 31st.

**To download our detailed brochure visit:** [http://uregina.ca/hadjjstt/centre\\_index.html](http://uregina.ca/hadjjstt/centre_index.html) or contact:

Dr. Darren G. Candow, Gerontology Program Coordinator at 306.585.4906 or [Darren.Candow@uregina.ca](mailto:Darren.Candow@uregina.ca)

## Advertise in the CAH Newsletter

The CAH Newsletter charges a small fee for advertisements intended to recruit research participants (for research approved by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board). We will accept advertisements of interest to seniors.

In addition, we charge a fee for corporate (non University of Regina) advertising.

All ads will be subject to approval by the CAH Administrator.

### University of Regina Unit and Researcher Rates:

### Corporate Rates:

Full Page: \$100 Half Page: \$50 Quarter Page: \$35

Full Page: \$150 Half Page: \$100 Quarter Page: \$85

**CAH Membership:** Interested in joining the CAH? Complete the application form available online at the CAH website. For more information, please contact [cah@uregina.ca](mailto:cah@uregina.ca)