



at the UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

The Newsletter

CAH Trainees Granted EPIC-AT Fellowships to Pursue Digital Health Solutions for Older Adults

As announced in the CAH Fall 2022 newsletter, Centre on Aging and Health (CAH) affiliated researchers, Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos (a principal applicant) and Dr. Natasha Gallant (early career researcher), are pleased to be heavily involved in the new national Early Professionals, Inspired Careers in AgeTech (EPIC-AT) Health Research Training Platform (H RTP), powered by AGE-WELL and funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. EPIC-AT is a collaborative effort led by researchers from 11 universities and research hospitals across six Canadian provinces, and is housed at the University of Toronto. The focus of EPIC-AT is on digital health solutions for seniors with complex health needs.

The competency-based, experiential learning platform is an extension of AGE-WELL's globally-leading EPIC training program and will provide one-year fellowships to at least 127 graduate

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students, postdoctoral fellows and early career researchers at Canadian institutions from 2022-2027 (minimum of \$8,000 each, but most often augmented by partner funding).

Participants will be equipped to develop, implement and evaluate digital technology solutions across areas such as information and communication technologies (ICT), telemedicine, artificial intelligence, sensors, smart environments, and wearables. These solutions will help older Canadians age safely, independently, and with dignity in the setting of their choice.

To date, five University of Regina students have been successful in obtaining fellowships, offering both training and financial support and we hope that more will apply. We collected quotes from the U of R graduate students who have been accepted as program fellows thus far:

"I was an Early Professionals, Inspired Careers in AgeTech Health Research Training Platform (EPIC-AT H RTP) fellow, 2022. The program has helped me enhance my professional development skills through resourceful courses and supported me in establishing networking across diverse communities. The program also has created a new opportunity to plan my career and linked me with experts in different fields. I am really proud to be an EPIC-AT Fellow and excited to explore new

opportunities!"

- Mir Nabila Ashraf, EPIC-AT Fellow & Graduate Student in Aging Studies

"The EPIC-AT program was an enriching experience that allowed me to connect with likeminded trainees working to address the complex health needs of older adults and their families. In addition, the program provided me with tools to learn and grow as a researcher in aging and technology that I am looking forward to applying in my own work."

- Louise Castillo, EPIC-AT Fellow & Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology

"As a trainee in the EPIC-AT program, I underwent invaluable training in interdisciplinary collaboration and the implementation of ethical, impactful initiatives to bring about substantial improvements in the lives of older adults. The relationships I have established within the AgeWell community have proven to be of immense benefit to me."

- Kelsey Haczekwicz, EPIC-AT Fellow & Graduate Student in Clinical Psychology

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“The EPIC-AT Fellowship was an invaluable training experience that afforded me the opportunity to grow in my professional development as a trainee and future researcher in aging and technology. Through unique and enriching educational experiences, including engaging with older adult stakeholders and mentorship from current leaders within the field, I was able to further refine and develop new skills that will be necessary in addressing the complex health challenges facing older adults through technological solutions.

- Rhonda Stopyn, EPIC-AT Fellow & Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology

The EPIC-AT Fellowship has been

instrumental in connecting me with like-minded trainees as we work towards addressing the complex health needs of older adults. Through the curated courses and mentorship program I have gained valuable knowledge and expertise on digital technology solutions and other important areas including policy, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge translation.”

- Vivian Tran, EPIC-AT Fellow & Doctoral Student in Clinical Psychology

To learn more about eligibility and how to apply to the program, please visit www.agewell-epic.ca/program. Applicants must submit an EPIC-AT H RTP Fellowship application, supporting documents and provide referees. Applications are expected to open in spring 2024, with fellowships beginning in Fall 2024.

NOMINATIONS ARE OPEN FOR 2023/2024 INNOVATION IN HEALTH AND WELLNESS AWARD

The Centre on Aging and Health Award for Innovation in Health and Wellness recognizes Regina-based individuals, groups, or organizations, offering health and wellness services to older adults. Award recipients must have introduced an innovative approach to service provision or must have conducted field research to evaluate services or programs for older persons.

If you know of someone that would be deserving of this award, nominations (of no more than 8 pages) are to be submitted at any time up until November 30, 2023 for the 2023-2024 Award.

For more information on eligibility, adjudication, or about how to apply, please visit <https://research.uregina.ca/cah/about-cah/innovation-in-health-wellness-award/> or contact Kathryn Smart, CAH Administrator, at kathryn.smart@uregina.ca

UR Caregiver App

A mobile app to help caregivers of people living with dementia manage their stress



URCaregiver

Caregivers of people living with dementia experience significant stress which can negatively affect their mental health. Louise Castillo, a doctoral student in clinical psychology at the University of Regina working under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos, is working to address this issue. Her dissertation focuses on evaluating a stress-management resource mobile app for caregivers of people living with dementia.

The developed app is informed by previous research and co-created with caregiver partners. Louise's previous work, which was recently published in the journal *Aging and Mental Health*, identified significant gaps in the lack of psychological resources available for caregivers. The developed app will include research information about stress and coping strategies (e.g., relaxation, self-care, managing unhelpful thoughts) that caregivers can use to manage their stress.

To evaluate the app, Louise will recruit family caregivers and randomly assign them to an app group or to control groups. Different outcomes will be measured (e.g., stress, mental health, and burden) and compared to test the effectiveness of the developed app. A subset of participants will be invited to complete interviews assessing their perceptions in using the app, and improvements that could be made to the app. If proven effective, the app will be available to download free of charge for caregivers. This has the potential to improve the quality of life of caregivers of people living with dementia. Recruitment for this study is aimed to start in Fall 2023. This research is supported by AGE-WELL and the Canadian Frailty Network (<https://agewell-nce.ca/archives/17194>).



Louise Castillo, University of Regina

Louise's doctoral research is supported by a national doctoral award from the Alzheimer Society of Canada. Moreover, she was recipient of an EPIC-Age Tech Fellowship. The EPIC-AT Health Research

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Training Platform, supported by CIHR and AGE-WELL, is a national training platform that prepares graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and early career researchers to be future leaders in digital health solutions for older adults with complex health needs.

Another facet of Louise's research focuses on improving pain assessment and management practices of individuals living with dementia and using a science-media partnership for effective knowledge mobilization of pain research. At the 2022 Canadian Pain Society (CPS) Scientific Meeting, Louise was awarded first place in the Clinical Science Poster Competition for this work and was the winner of the CPS Art Award for her painting illustrating pain and mental health. The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan recently published a story and interview about Louise's research, which is available at: <https://alzheimer.ca/sk/en/whats-happening/news/new-app-care-partner-mental-health>.

Castillo, L.I.R., Tran, V., Hadjistavropoulos, T. (2023). Are currently available apps meeting the needs of caregivers of people living with dementia? Evaluation of existing apps. Aging and Mental Health. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2023.2177832>

Aging Studies Graduate Program Co-coordinators Announced

We are pleased to announce that Dr. Abigail Wickson-Griffiths, Faculty of Nursing, and Dr. Natasha Gallant, Department of Psychology, have kindly agreed to serve as co-coordinators of our Master's program in Aging Studies. The Aging Studies program is an interdisciplinary program that involves collaboration of faculty members from several University of Regina academic units, including the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies, Faculty of Nursing, Faculty of Social Work and the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy. This collaboration gives Aging Studies graduate students access to an array of courses across various disciplines and a wide range of research opportunities.

With a growing cohort of Aging Studies graduate students, Dr. Wickson-Griffiths and Dr. Gallant will work together to support the program and its students by overseeing program admissions, working

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and click on **"Become a Member."**

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with students around course selection, providing guidance on the completion of program requirements, and working with members of the Centre on Aging and Health and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research to support student success.

Dr. Abigail Wickson-Griffiths, RN, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Regina. Her professional practice and academic background have centered on geriatric nursing because of her passion for improving the quality of care for older adults, especially those living with dementia. Her primary interests are a palliative approach and end-of-life care, dementia care, long-term care and advanced practice nursing. She is well published in this area and has well established research collaborations both within Saskatchewan and across Canada.



Dr. Abigail Wickson-Griffiths, Associate Professor, Faculty of Nursing

Dr. Wickson-Griffiths is a research supervisor of graduate students in aging studies.

Dr. Natasha Gallant is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology. As Director of the Aging, Residents, and Caregivers (ARC) Research Unit, she is passionate about using research in a way that meaningfully improves the quality of care for and quality of life of aging populations. Funded by the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation (SHRF), her most recent project is aimed at establishing research priorities for long-term care residents living with serious mental illness in Saskatchewan. Her work has been published in a variety of health-related and gerontological outlets. She is also an active research supervisor in the Aging Studies program.



Natasha Gallant, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology

Dr. Gallant and Dr. Wickson Griffiths are outstanding scholars and we are proud that they have agreed to support the aging studies program with their work.

CAH Newsletter Currently Accepting Submissions

Your announcements, research updates, and CAH-related news items are welcome. Please email submissions to: Kathryn Smart, CAH Administrator at Kathryn.Smart@uregina.ca

CAH Director Awarded 2023 Betty Havens Prize

Congratulations to CAH Director, Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos, on being awarded the prestigious 2023 Betty Havens Prize for Knowledge Mobilization in Aging, sponsored by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Aging. Applicants are nominated by peers, teams or organizations. In recognition of his groundbreaking research and knowledge mobilization, the Betty Havens Prize recognizes Hadjistavropoulos's remarkable contribution to creating widespread and useful knowledge that is being used by stakeholders such as patients, the public, policy-makers, clinicians, and other researchers.

Hadjistavropoulos's research focuses on the underrecognition and undertreatment of pain in older adults, with particular attention to patients with dementia who live in long-term care (LTC) facilities. The ability of patients with dementia to communicate their pain to caregivers is compromised, which may result in the prescription of psychotropic (rather than analgesic) medications to manage challenging behaviours such as aggression and agitation resulting from undertreated pain. The use of psychotropic medication increases the likelihood of injury due to accidents such as fall, resulting in increased interaction

with the health care system and sometimes hastening death.

Dr. H has produced one of the most widely-cited guidelines on pain assessment in dementia, and his KM efforts have put this work into the hands of those who need it most.
- U of R Twitter



Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos,
CAH Director
(U of R Dept. of Photography)

As research has shown that it takes an average of 17 years for health research findings to make their way into widespread use, Dr. Hadjistavropoulos's Knowledge Mobilization (KM) strategy, which has been extensively evaluated, is

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key to reducing suffering in this population and includes:

- ***the development of evidence-based content with input/support from caregiver partners, health professionals, and organisations such as the AGE-WELL Network of Centres of Excellence, the CIHR-funded Canadian Pain Network;***
- ***dissemination using social media in partnership with researchers and knowledge users;***
- ***an online repository of evidence-based content directed to knowledge users (www.seepainmoreclearly.org);***
- ***dissemination of the Pain Assessment Checklist for Seniors with Limited Ability to Communicate (PACSLAC/PACSLAC-II) developed in Dr. Hadjistavropoulos's Health Psychology Lab, which allow nurses and caregivers to assess pain (includes an app format);***
- ***online continuing pain assessment education for long-term care staff;***
- ***implementation science in LTC, aimed at increasing the frequency of evidence-based pain assessment;***
- ***a pain self-management book for older adults.***

Welcome To New Aging Studies Masters Students!

The Centre on Aging and Health is pleased to welcome four new Aging Studies graduate students to the University of Regina. The Aging Studies graduate program is an two-year interdisciplinary M.A./M.Sc. program.

The new students are:

-Kay Lee (Bachelor of Science in Nursing, University of Saskatchewan) will be working with Dr. Heather Nelson and Dr. Abigail Wickson-Griffiths from the Faculty of Nursing;

-Sylvie O'Callaghan, with undergraduate degrees in Psychology and Justice Studies and a Master's degree in Public Administration, will be working with Dr. Rebecca Genoe (Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies);

Jordan Pierson (BSW) will be supervised by Dr. Vivian Puplampu (Faculty of Nursing);

Olivia Ryan (BA in psychology) will be supervised by Dr. Natasha Gallant (Psychology) and Dr. Abigail Wickson-Griffiths (Faculty of Nursing).

Also a warm welcome to Regina to Mir Nabila Ashraf (Bachelor of Dental Surgery and Master's of Public Health) who is working with Dr. Natasha Gallant (Psychology).

APPLY FOR THE M.A./M.SC. AGING STUDIES PROGRAM

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By 2051, about one in four Canadians is expected to
be 65 or over.”**

– *Statistics Canada*

- Exciting inter-disciplinary, research-oriented graduate degree program.
- Provides research training and specialized gerontology knowledge to health professionals and students.
- Emphasizes both the physiological and psychosocial aspects of aging.
- The collaboration of the Faculty of Arts, the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies and the Faculty of Social Work and coordinated by the University of Regina’s Centre on Aging and Health.

Admission Requirements:

4-year undergraduate degree in areas such as, nursing, kinesiology, psychology, social work, health studies, sociology, biology, or a health professional degree .

Applications Due: March 31st, 2024
(for Fall 2024 Admissions)

For More Information:

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Apply now for the 2023/2024 CAH Small Grants Research Award!

Amount Available: \$1,500 Application Deadline:
December 15, 2024

This award is intended to fund pilot projects or other work aimed to lead to the preparation of a major national application in the area of health and aging.

To apply, or for more information:
Visit <https://research.uregina.ca/cah/about-cah/cah-grants-programs/>
or contact cah@uregina.ca or 306.337.8477

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