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## TECHNOLOGIES TO MAKE THE LIVES OF OLDER ADULTS HEALTHIER AND SAFER: THE 2013 DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

On March 7, 2013, the University of Regina Centre on Aging and Health (CAH) hosted its annual Distinguished Lecture. This year, Dr. Alex Mihailidis of the Institute of Biomaterials & Biomedical Engineering at the University of Toronto presented a lecture titled “Technologies to Help Older Adults Live Healthier & Safer Lives” that featured innovative technologies to help older adults live longer (and safer) in their own homes. This self-sufficiency also benefits family and friends that are often burdened by caregiving.

In his talk, Mihailidis stressed the need for technologies that change attitudes and transform the marketplace. In this case, these innovative inventions are integrated into the home and can prompt and remind adults with Alzheimer’s disease to perform tasks such as hand washing and taking medications. They can also detect when someone has fallen. The system can then call for help and alert family, friends or emergency response units based on the fall victim’s response (or lack thereof). Mihailidis also discussed tiles that can monitor blood pressure and respiration, information that can be obtained, recorded and then sent to healthcare providers and other caregivers. (continued on page 2)



Dr. Alex Mihailidis

Please email *CAH* Newsletter submissions to:

Scott J. Wilson  
CAH Administrator/  
Newsletter Editor  
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## **TECHNOLOGIES TO MAKE THE LIVES OF OLDER ADULTS HEALTHIER AND SAFER (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)**

While many of these technologies are still in development, Mihailidis' goal is to make zero-effort technology, meaning these integrated technologies will require no manual input or effort by users or caregivers. Furthermore, they should not add to caregiver burden, should require little or no reprogramming, and should benefit both end user and caregiver. In addition, such technologies, being fully integrated into the home, have the power to eliminate the current stigmas surrounding similar technologies, specifically in the realm of fall detection.



Dr. Alex Mihailidis and Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos

Mihailidis went on to say that another goal of his research is to make these solutions less expensive. In fact, he believes that to assist as many people as possible, several technologies can be created cheaply by adapting inexpensive technologies such as the 3D camera in something like an Xbox Kinect. Though he acknowledges that profitability for companies is understandable, it should be secondary to consumer benefit.

Ultimately, he stressed the need for more research in order to integrate these technologies into common household objects so they do not interfere with day-to-day life. They also need to be very easy (and quick) to install, while being inexpensive for the average consumer. For these criteria to be possible, Mihailidis believes the current research (and consumer) landscape, in regards to such technologies, needs to change. Developers of technologies that improve caregiving and overall quality of life, according to Mihailidis, need to worry less about the cost and more about the usefulness and net benefit to the end user and caregivers.

For more information on Dr. Mihailidis' research, contact him at [Alex.Mihailidis@utoronto.ca](mailto:Alex.Mihailidis@utoronto.ca)

### **Apply now for the 2013/2014 CAH Small Grants Research Award!**

**Amount Available: \$1,500    Application Deadline: December 15, 2013**

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: [http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre\\_index.htm](http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre_index.htm) or [cah@uregina.ca](mailto:cah@uregina.ca) or 306.337.8477

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND THE AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY: CAH SPONSORS PLENARY SPEAKER AT LLC GERONTOLOGY INSTITUTE**

At the 11th Annual University of Regina LLC Gerontology Institute, the CAH sponsored and introduced plenary speaker Dr. Lillian Thorpe, Geriatric Psychiatrist, Saskatoon Health Region and Professor, Departments of Psychiatry and Community Health and Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan. Dr. Thorpe's talk, "Mental Health and the Age-Friendly Community," explored the impact of community on mental health as well as potential improvements to healthcare and other environments.

For Thorpe, part of the challenge in tackling issues related to mental health in older adults is the difficulty in defining "older adults" because there is an important distinction between chronological and functional aging. In other words, she suggests that solutions are often implemented based on chronological age (years lived) and not functional age, a more accurate measurement of age that includes health and other factors that better determine the support one needs later in life.

Ultimately, quality of life has significant impacts on mental health, meaning age-friendly communities are of utmost importance and will be even more so as

Canada's population continues to age. In fact, Thorpe believes age-friendly initiatives are already having positive results on mental health, citing projects like the Eden Alternative at the Sherbrooke Community Center in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and other sites as evidence.

In the end, Thorpe recommends more health promotion for older adults, increases in physical activity, additional programs to prevent falls, a reduction in polypharmacy, and increased nutrition counselling. She also hopes better public transportation, more income support for impoverished older adults, and greater geriatric services at home and in hospitals will all improve the mental and physical health of older adults.

For more information on Dr. Thorpe's research, contact her at [lilian.thorpe@usask.ca](mailto:lilian.thorpe@usask.ca).



Dr. Lillian Thorpe

## **ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF SASKATCHEWAN HOSTS SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH**

On January 16, 2013, the Alzheimer Society hosted their annual Spotlight on Research. The event brings together researchers, the public, government officials, and healthcare professionals in order to learn about and share the latest developments in improving the quality of life for those living with dementia.

The keynote speakers were Dr. Serge Gauthier, Director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Unit, McGill Centre for Studies in Aging as well as Dr. Darrell

Mousseau, Saskatchewan Research Chair in Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia.

The evening also featured poster presentations by CAH members Dr. Rebecca Genoe, Dr. Paulette Hunter, and Michelle Gagnon, while Scott J. Wilson, CAH Administrator, emceed the event. For more information on this and other Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan events, visit [www.alzheimer.ca/sk](http://www.alzheimer.ca/sk).

## **M.A./M.Sc. GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM UPDATE: THOUGHTS FROM A RECENT GRADUATE**

The CAH congratulates Irene Forcheh, graduate of the University of Regina M.A./M.Sc. Program in Gerontology, on the successful defense of her thesis, "Stressors and coping strategies of older adults as caregivers in the era of HIV/AIDS: A case study of Botswana." Forcheh was supervised by Dr. Abu Bockarie, Faculty of Education.

This is Forcheh's second graduate degree, as she holds a Master of Social Work from the University of Botswana as well. Her research includes work on elderly women and children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, stress and family caregiving, and socio-economic determinants of mental health.

She is currently working as a facility youth worker for the Ministry of Social Services in Regina, Saskatchewan and is a research supervisor for a UNDP project investigating corruption in Botswana.

She hopes to continue with her education by completing a PhD in gerontology.

Forcheh believes the M.A./M.Sc. Gerontology Program and similar programs are important because they contribute to the knowledge available regarding the

physical, mental, and social changes facing people as they grow older, which is crucial in areas of caregiving and public policy.

For Forcheh, "studying these issues ensures that students and future professionals in the field of gerontology are well equipped with cutting-edge knowledge that is vital in the care of older adults."



Irene Forcheh

## **CAH WELCOMES NEW M.A./M.Sc. GERONTOLOGY PROGRAM COORDINATOR**

The CAH is pleased to name Dr. Ronald Martin as our new M.A./M.Sc. Program in Gerontology Coordinator.

Dr. Martin is an Associate Professor in Educational Psychology at the University of Regina. He is a Registered Doctoral Psychologist with a background in Clinical Psychology.

He is involved in health-related research pertaining to seniors (i.e., pain and falls among seniors with and without dementia). His current research interests focus on health and wellness among teachers. Moreover, Dr. Martin has been

awarded Tri-Council (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) and provincial grants (Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation) to support his current program of research. He will serve as coordinator from July 1st, 2013 to June 30th, 2014.



Dr. Ron Martin

## THE AGING BRAIN: CAH CELEBRATES BRAIN AWARENESS WEEK WITH DOCUMENTARY FILM SCREENING AND PANEL DISCUSSION



The CAH had a busy March, as we hosted two well-attended public events. One such event, on March 14, 2013, was our annual Regina Brain Awareness Week event. This year, we held a free public screening of “The Aging Brain: Through Many Lives,” part of the David Grubin produced *The Secret Life of the Brain* series. “The Aging Brain” discusses neuroscientific discoveries regarding the resilience of the brain.

More specifically, the documentary highlights the brain’s ability to be sharp and healthy late into life and uses ninety-five-year-old United States Poet Laureate Stanley Kunitz as an example of this vitality. It also focuses on Alzheimer’s disease research as well as the brain’s ability to overcome damage from stroke and other injuries.

Members of the University of Regina Department of Psychology, including Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos, Dr. Laurie Sykes-Tottenham, and graduate student Ms. Bianca Hatin, answered questions following the film.

It was the 11th year of Brain Awareness Week in Regina. Other events in the city included various public displays by Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region departments.

If you would like to become a partner member for Regina Brain Awareness Week or cross promote your event, contact CAH Administrator, Scott J. Wilson, at [cah@uregina.ca](mailto:cah@uregina.ca) or 306.337.8477.

For more information on Brain Awareness Week, visit <http://www.dana.org/brainweek/>

## CAH THANKS DR. DARREN CANDOW

The CAH wishes to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Darren Candow, an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Health Studies at the University of Regina.

Dr. Candow served as Gerontology Program Coordinator since July 1st, 2009. Dr. Candow’s leadership was helpful to many graduate students over the course of his time as coordinator. He will remain a CAH Member.

His research is primarily concerned with nutritional interventions as well as weight-bearing activities

and how both can improve aging muscle and bone health.

We wish him all the best in his research, teaching and in his other roles, including

positions with the *Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition*, the *Journal of Aging and Physical Activity*, and the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology to name just a few.



Dr. Darren Candow

## - NEWS AND NOTES -

**Dr. David Malloy**, CAH Member, has accepted a position as Acting Vice President (Research), University of Regina.

**Dr. Shanthi Johnson**, CAH Member, received a Partnerships for Health System Improvement grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) worth \$341,260 over three years - \$273,008 being provided by CIHR and \$68,252 from the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation. The grant will be used for Dr. Johnson's research project - "Improving Functional Capacity and Reducing Falls among Frail Older Adults: Delivery of Exercise Intervention Through Home Care Network."

**Dr. Susan Whiting**, CAH Member, of the University of Saskatchewan, received the Earle Willard McHenry Award for Recognition of Distinguished Service in the Field of Nutrition from the Canadian Nutrition Society at its 2012 annual meeting.

**Dr. Lesley McBain**, CAH Member, was a Visiting Scholar at the University of British Columbia (Department of Medicine, Division of Neurology, National Core for Neuroethics) in the Fall 2012 semester. The Canadian Dementia Knowledge Translation Network supported the position. Dr. McBain's research examined the regional challenges that Aboriginal people face when dealing with dementia, with a focus on British Columbia and Saskatchewan.

**Dr. Thomas Hadjistavropoulos**, CAH Director, received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal for his dedication to improving the lives of Canadian older adults. The medal marks the 60th anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's accession to the throne as Queen of Canada and honours her as well as significant contributions by notable Canadians.



### **SURVEYS, QUESTIONNAIRES AND DATA, OH MY!: CAH SURVERYMONKEY PROGRAM FOR CAH MEMBERS**

The CAH offers members access to a CAH SurveyMonkey account, which simplifies and encourages aging and health research. Researchers can use the account to give surveys, questionnaires, and collect valuable data. Questionnaire material will be entered by the CAH in order to maximize confidentiality as multiple researchers may be using the account simultaneously. Researchers who wish to use 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).

## RESEARCH REPORT—COMPLETING THE CIRCLE: END OF LIFE CARE WITH, BY, AND FOR ABORIGINAL FAMILIES

CAH members are dedicated to conducting research that is of particular importance to Saskatchewan, which means many of our members (and those who collaborate with them) are investigating areas such as rural health and aging and aboriginal health and aging.

CAH members, including Dr. Mary Hampton, Elder Ken Goodwill, Dr. Carrie Bourassa, and others, work (or have worked) on the Completing the Circle Project, which “looks at culturally sensitive approaches to end-of-life care, and provides resources for working with aboriginal individuals, families and communities.”

The project brings together First Nations Elders, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professors and students as well as healthcare professionals.

Their work “focuses on promoting the inclusion of self-defined end-of-life healthcare for Aboriginal families within hospital settings as well as within Regina community agencies. [They have] been able to create space for Aboriginal Elders and community members to speak about culturally appropriate end-of-life care for Aboriginal families.”

Recently, Louise Cadrin, Completing the Circle team member, gave a presentation at the 19th International Congress on Palliative Care. The presentation, “Continuing the Journey with Aboriginal Families: Healing and Sacred Words Shared,” profiled the use of community-based participatory research in creating videos to facilitate delivery of culturally appropriate end-of-life care for Aboriginal families, while relaying knowledge about end-of-life protocols. These videos are now available to healthcare providers and Aboriginal healthcare agencies.

For more information on this presentation and the videos, visit [www.aboriginalendoflifecare.com](http://www.aboriginalendoflifecare.com).



Completing the Circle Team

### CAH MEMBERSHIP

Interested in joining the CAH?  
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on the CAH website.

[http://uregina.ca/hadjstt/centre\\_index.htm](http://uregina.ca/hadjstt/centre_index.htm)

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### Admission Requirements:

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

**Application Deadline: March 31**

For further information, please contact:

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Download the brochure at: [http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre\\_index.html](http://uregina.ca/hadjistt/centre_index.html)

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