

Geriatric Health Care



What's the issue?

Canada's population is aging. In 2012, almost one in seven Canadians was a senior. Now the number is more than one in six. By 2030, that will jump to nearly one in four. Our health care system is inadequate, it was made to deal with acute care, not with the chronic needs of seniors. It's hospital-based and doesn't focus enough on home care and community-based care. Sadly, the pandemic made it even more urgent for our health care systems (and social systems) to rethink how to address the rising needs of seniors. It's time for an overhaul!

Some challenges

GERIATRIC TRAINING: Canada faces a shortage of geriatricians. There are only about 300 geriatricians working in Canada (half of those in Ontario). We need to graduate more specialists, but the number geriatric specialization is capped. Beyond that, a wide range of health care professionals need increased training on serving the seniors population.

HEALTHY AGING: Healthy aging encompasses active lifestyles, social inclusion, mental health, age-friendly communities and coping with change. Yet care, services and policies for seniors can often focus more narrowly on physical health.

LONG-TERM CARE (LTC): The number of seniors, and longer lifespans, are creating multiple pressures on LTC. There's a shortage of spaces, a shortage of personal support workers, and those arriving in LTC often require more extensive support. A national plan for LTC is sorely missing.

ELDER ABUSE: Up to 10% of seniors experience some form of elder abuse – physical, psychological, emotional, financial – each year. Still, the awareness of the issue, and resources available to prevent abuse and help victims, remain lacking.



Questions for politicians

- How can we better meet the ongoing and often complex care needs of seniors, in hospital and in the community?
- What sort of geriatric training should be mandatory across health care?
- What are your public policy priorities to boost the overall well-being of seniors?
- How can the federal government and the provinces work together to ensure national long-term care standards are implemented?
- What human resources, structural or funding changes can increase the capacity of long-term care?
- How should we invest in serving the victims and raising the profile of elder abuse?