

# BC Pages

**Newsletter of the B.C. Psychogeriatric Association**

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## President's Report

### **It's Been an Incredible Three Years – Thank You to Everyone for Your Contributions!**

The May 2008 Conference and Annual General Meeting in Cranbrook (May 1-3) will mark the end of my 3-year term as President of the BC Psychogeriatric Association. Despite the many challenges we have faced, it has been an incredible opportunity, and I want to thank everyone across the province who has contributed to successes in our work.

#### *Partnerships and BCPGA Research Initiatives*

As a completely volunteer organization with no paid staff, I believe we can be proud of the collective accomplishments over the past several years. This has included our active involvement with the Geriatric Mental Health Education Initiative; the BC Home and Community Care Research Network; the BC Network for Aging Research and Health Authorities across the province. On the front of research, we have received two large grants from the Public Health Agency of Canada for the development, piloting and evaluation of the Seniors' Mental Health Policy Lens and most recently two additional grants have been received to study mental health issues experienced by older adults with cancer. See page 7 for more information about these projects.

#### *Invitations to Share Our Expertise*

Our provincial Board and members across the province are approached regularly to contribute their expertise at local, regional, provincial and national levels. A few examples are speaking at Canadian Association on Gerontology conferences, BC Health Authority events, Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors' Issues consultations, the Federal, Provincial and Territorial Working Group on Elder Abuse, Kirby Commission on Mental Health and Addictions, Canadian Coalition on Seniors' Mental Health events and many, many more too numerous to mention. We are regularly asked to provide our assessment of a wide range of initiatives; the amendments to the Adult Guardianship legislation and the development of the Dementia Services Framework are examples.

#### *Supporting Researchers*

As an association, we have offered our support to a range of research projects in British Columbia and across the country. Examples include research focused on caregiving for older adults with dementia; on addressing caregiving for older adults with serious and persistent mental illness; and on transitions faced by older adults within the home and community care system.

#### *Advances in the Work of the Board*

Important advances have also been made in the work of the Provincial BCPGA Board. One such advance is the inclusion of a student representative on the Board and the related thrust to welcome student BCPGA members. The Advocacy Committee is increasingly supporting members in their advocacy work across the province as well as developing relationships with decision-

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makers at the provincial, regional and local level. Our accounting and membership systems have been modernized (well developed databases, etc.). And there has been significant progress in our communications work including improvements to our website, new features in our newsletter and informational emails to our membership.

### ***Thank You...but not Goodbye...***

It is an honour to have worked with everyone on the Board and across the province over the past years and, in particular, in the past 3 years during my time as President. The activities I have identified above barely scratch the surface of the growing impact our organization and members have with regard to the health and wellbeing of older adults in British Columbia and beyond. I want to thank everyone for all the work you have carried out to ensure that older citizens have the best possible quality of life in their later years. We often identify the work of those who are most visible on the Board or in the community, but I would also like to acknowledge the BCPGA members in workplaces and regions across the province who work quietly and often unrecognized, with passion, expertise and determination, to create a better life for older British Columbians. Your work – day in and out – is very much appreciated!

### ***Hope to See You at the Annual BCPGA Conference***

In the year to come, I look forward to continuing to work with everyone in my capacity as Past-President. And I hope to see many of you at the incredible annual conference that is planned for Cranbrook on May 1-3 of this year. It's not too late to register! Information about the conference and for registration can be found in this newsletter or you can go to the BCPGA website – [www.bcpga.bc.ca](http://www.bcpga.bc.ca)

Wishing you all the very best...

Dawn Hemingway, President, BCPGA  
hemingwa@unbc.ca

**The British Columbia Psychogeriatric Association (BCPGA) is a professional, multi-disciplinary, non-profit interest group.**

**BCPGA**

**c/o Dawn Hemingway, MSc, MSW, RSW  
Social Work Program  
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#### **Board Members for 2007-08:**

President: Dawn Hemingway 250-960-5694

Secretary: Louise Holland 250-565-4708

Treasurer/Membership: Maia Kennedy 604-875-4728

2008 Conference Chair: Randy Grahn 250-428-3637

Communications Chair: Randy Grahn

Advocacy Co-Chair: John Gray 250-386-3864

Advocacy Co-Chair: Penny MacCourt 250-755-6180

Research Chair: Sandie Somers 250-339-1440

Heather Cooke 250-807-9183.

Anne Earthy 604-730-7631

Lorea Ytterberg 250-565-7450

Student Representative: Anthony Kupferschmidt 604-646-6614

## **Conference Registrations Are Going Well**

Much to the relief of the Conference Committee, registrations for the annual conference being held this year in Cranbrook are going well. Good interest is also being shown in the two pre-conference workshops: the Dementia Update and the Front Line Care Providers Education Day.

The Dementia Update will be of particular interest to physicians, nurses and mental health staff. Featuring Drs. Martha Donnelly, Kiran Rabheru, Elisabeth Drance and Randy Grahn, this one-day event will provide information on the optimal management of complex cases.

At the Education Day for Front Line Care Providers, Elisabeth Antifeau will give a morning workshop on Supporting the Remaining Abilities and Strengths of persons with Alzheimers Disease. The afternoon workshop with Anne Earthy will focus on Recognition and Response to Agitation and Excessive Behaviour.

Barbara Lindsay of the Alzheimer Society of BC will kick off the conference with her keynote address on "Your influence counts - the future of Patient Centered Care, Advocacy and the state of services in B.C." at the Thursday evening banquet. Dr. Kiran Rabheru, geriatric psychiatrist at VGH, UBC and Riverview, will provide the keynote on "Depression in Late life, Relationship to Dementia" Friday morning.

Kimberly Azyan from the Office of the Public Trustee will give a keynote Friday afternoon on "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow – Adult Guardianship Laws in BC."

A broad offering of sessions will make choosing difficult the rest of Friday and Saturday morning. A poster session, silent auction and optional evening of fun (see p.3) will provide additional interest and fun. See the website ([www.bcpga.bc.ca](http://www.bcpga.bc.ca)) for the full schedule and for registration information and forms.

There's still time and space available at the conference, but hurry! You won't want to miss this opportunity to learn, to network with others and to enjoy the Kootenay experience!

## **NOTICE OF AGM & CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The Annual General Meeting of BCPGA and an election to fill two vacancies on the BCPGA Board of Directors for 2008-09 will be held at 8:30 AM on Saturday May 3, 2008 at the Prestige Rocky Mountain Resort & Convention Centre. Nominations for the Board positions are invited and should be sent to President Dawn Hemingway [hemingwa@unbc.ca](mailto:hemingwa@unbc.ca). Nominations from the floor will also be invited at the meeting.



### *Announcing A Special Event at the Friday evening dinner!!*

*Performing live at the conference dinner Friday May 2 will be Vancouver Actress Pamela Finlayson presenting an excerpt of her one-woman show ~ "The BeeKeeper"! Attendance at this event is optional, but it's guaranteed to be a wonderful performance.*

*"She will keep you spellbound as a daughter is forced to confront the bees, and brings to life the tale of Edie's relationship to her father, a beekeeper in Saskatchewan, and her discovery that he has dementia."*

There are currently spaces available for this optional Friday evening in an exceptional, relaxed atmosphere.

Cost is \$45 pp including:

- Return transportation to the St. Eugene Mission Resort (Relax and enjoy the evening, enjoy a glass of wine with dinner or other libation – no need to drive!)
- A sumptuous chef-carved dinner (Vegetarians please notify via registration or email and your needs will be accommodated)
- "The Beekeeper" live performance (Edie doesn't know it yet, but she is about to be saved by the one thing she fears the most ~ the bees.)
- Casino coupons for those who wish to 'try their luck' (The Casino is a separate yet attached building to the St. Eugene Mission)

There's still time to register for the conference (see the BCPGA website for registration information:

[www.bcpga.bc.ca](http://www.bcpga.bc.ca)). Please include your payment for this special Friday night event with your conference

## LINKS & LEADS

### Disability Tax Credit

This tax credit applies to specific disabilities in people of any age. Specifically, it is intended for individuals who have a severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions.

The disability tax credit can be as high as \$1,400 per year and can be claimed retroactively for up to ten years. It doesn't matter how old the individual is. The disability can be the result of a workplace injury, an accident, declining health, or a chronic condition.

If an individual or his/her spouse meets one of the following nine conditions, they may be eligible for the disability tax credit:

- Unable to walk normally for 100 meters (the length of a football field) without angina, pain, or a cane, wheelchair or walker;
- Vision loss in excess of 20%;
- Markedly restricted in communicating;
- Unable to hear clearly, even with hearing aids;
- Require assistance in feeding;
- Unable to bathe or fully dress without assistance;
- Poor bladder or bowel functioning;
- Problems perceiving instructions, thinking, or remembering (people suffering from dementia or Alzheimers);
- Life-sustaining therapies such as kidney dialysis or chemotherapy are needed 3 or more times a week.

A doctor must fill out a tax form certifying the person has one of these disabilities to qualify automatically for the tax credit. There are no conditions on how the money is spent, and it is not necessary to submit expenses related to the disability.

For further information see Canada Revenue Agency's websites: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/disability/> and <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pgb/ft/t2201/t2201-07e.pdf>

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A video currently making the rounds via the internet is neuroanatomist Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor speaking about her stroke experience: [www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/229](http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/view/id/229). This video of approximately 19 minutes is not only interesting in itself, but it might also be useful as a tool in working with some clients and/or their families to help in understanding what happens with a stroke. "As it happened -- as she felt her brain functions slip away one by one, speech, movement, understanding -- she studied and remembered every moment. This is a powerful story about how our brains define us and connect us to the world and to one another.... Amazed to find herself alive, Taylor spent eight years recovering her ability to think, walk and talk. She has become a spokesperson for stroke recovery and for the possibility of coming back from brain injury stronger than before. In her case, although the stroke damaged the left side of her brain, her recovery unleashed a torrent of creative energy from her right."

## **Northern BC Residents are on the Move to Meet the Needs of an Aging Population**

Aging issues are on the agenda in northern British Columbia. This is not at all surprising, given that the 65+ population is growing more rapidly in the North than in any other part of the province. Being a traditionally 'young person's' region, there are substantial planning and service issues to address. Northern communities are responding with a number of events and undertakings...and with the involvement of the BC Psychogeriatric Association.

### **Dialogue on Seniors' Issues (October 2007)**

In October 2007, the Prince George Council of Seniors hosted a *Dialogue on Seniors' Issues*. Invited participants included seniors' organizations, researchers, and all levels of government as well as health, housing and social service providers and advocates. As President of the BC Psychogeriatric Association, co-leader of the BC Network for Aging Research (BCNAR) and a long time activist on seniors' issues, I had the opportunity to speak about the work of BCNAR and our Association, including sharing aspects of the Seniors' Mental Health Policy lens and providing literature about BCPGA. Out of this event came two initiatives: 1) to tackle seniors' housing needs (a huge challenge) and 2) to create a handbook specifically about seniors' services in the North. Much work has been done since the Dialogue, and a survey on seniors' housing is almost ready to be launched.

### **Creating Age-Friendly Communities (January 2008)**

Early in 2008, the BC Network for Aging Research, Council of Seniors and the City of Prince George organized a session at UNBC on the implications of the World Health Organization Age-Friendly Communities Project on northern, rural and remote communities. Featuring the work of Dr. Elaine Gallagher from UVIC and Tessa Graham from the Ministry of Health, the event focused on what makes a community age-friendly. Both spoke about how our cities and towns will need a makeover. Streets, shops, offices and homes, and the way we think about the future will need to be modified to account for an increasingly older citizenry. Information about a range of organizations, including BCPGA, was made available to participants.

### **Aging Well in Northern, Rural and Remote Communities (March 2008)**

Researchers at the University of Northern British Columbia, in Northern Health, in the BC Network for Aging Research and other provincial research networks and organizations such as BCPGA are undertaking and supporting increasing volumes of research in the area of aging. At the end of March, these groups in partnership with northern seniors' organizations all came together to organize a northern conference on *Aging Well in Northern, Rural and Remote Communities*. The Conference was a huge success, attended by more than 100 participants from across the North including Prince Rupert, Terrace, Burns Lake, Fraser Lake, McBride, Tumbler Ridge, Granisle, Bella Coola, Bear Lake, Quesnel and Prince George. A major highlight of the event was a very moving

presentation given by His Honour, Steven Pointe, Lieutenant Governor of BC. Penny MacCourt and I also had the opportunity to provide a presentation focused entirely on the Seniors' Mental Health Policy Lens and how it could be used in northern BC for policy and program development and evaluation. In addition to hearing a variety of presentations, participants identified a number of areas that required further research (e.g., home support, informal caregiving, supports needed to age in place, etc.). The BC Network for Aging Research is making available 3 team-building grants in the amount of \$3,500 that researchers can apply for to carry out this work. The application deadline is August 1, 2008 [[www.aginghealthresearch.ca](http://www.aginghealthresearch.ca)].

### **Upcoming Events (April and May 2008)**

More events are in the works. On April 17, the Council of Seniors, City of Prince George, Northern Health and BC Network for Aging Research are hosting a Dialogue on Seniors' Health that will further address health care concerns of Prince George seniors in particular [Information: [info@pgcos.ca](mailto:info@pgcos.ca)]. On April 21 to 23, Northern Health is sponsoring a research conference in Terrace with one of the talks focused on developing northern psychogeriatric capacity [Information: [Sharon.warkentin@northernhealth.ca](mailto:Sharon.warkentin@northernhealth.ca)]. And, finally, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, the BC Network for Aging Research and the Yellowhead Rotary Club are hosting two workshops in Prince George both featuring Dr. Gloria Gutman from the Gerontology Research Centre at SFU. The morning session, focused on multi-disciplinary approaches to healthy aging, will be of particular interest to health and social service providers, administrators, planners, funders, advocates, researchers and students. The afternoon session will address active aging and the challenges for seniors and their families [Information: [conference@bcrrhm.ca](mailto:conference@bcrrhm.ca)].

Reports will be available from most, if not all, of these events. If you have any difficulty tracking them down, feel free to email me at: [hemingwa@unbc.ca](mailto:hemingwa@unbc.ca).

Submitted by: Dawn Hemingway

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## **Looking for an Excuse to Go to Paris, France?**

The 19th IAGG World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics is holding a conference in Paris July 5-9, 2009. Held every four years, the theme for the 2009 conference is "Longevity, Health and Wealth." The call for abstracts and symposia is now open. See this website for details: [www.paris2009.org/site/view8.php](http://www.paris2009.org/site/view8.php).

Main themes for this conference include: new technologies, integrated models of care, social policy and social welfare, mechanisms of aging, education and multidisciplinary training, psychogeriatrics, family and caregiving and many more.

Organizers say the focus of this conference represents an ideological u-turn away from perceiving population aging as catastrophic and now viewed as progress.

## ADVOCACY REPORT

### Policy Lens Will Be A Major Goal

The BCPGA Advocacy Committee (Penny MacCourt and John Gray, co-chairs) recommended and the Board agreed that advancing the "Seniors' Mental Health Policy Lens" would be a major advocacy goal with government for this year. Because the Seniors' Mental Health Policy Lens can be applied to so many policies, programs and practices it is ideal for sensitizing government to address the mental health needs of seniors in a large number of areas.

Meetings are being set up with the Minister of Health, the Honourable George Abbot, and senior government officials to discuss with them the Policy Lens and how it can be helpful.

BCPGA has an important advocacy role with central government, but it is important to emphasize that all BCPGA members have an advocacy responsibility. Advocacy opportunities for improving mental health services for older people arise not just when we give speeches but when we work in committees, work with our own and other organizations and with individual colleagues, family members and seniors. The range of these advocacy issues is not confined to those formally selected by BCPGA, like the Policy Lens or the Alzheimers strategy, but includes anything that will promote sensitive seniors' mental health programs and generally improve the mental health of seniors.

John Gray PhD  
Co Chair, Advocacy Committee

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### COSCO Provides Services and Advocates for Seniors

The Council of Seniors Citizens Organizations of BC (COSCO) is an umbrella organization made up of 75+ seniors' organizations as well as a significant number of individual associate members. Registered under the Societies Act since 1981, COSCO advocates for seniors, holds conferences and provides speakers on various topics related to illness and accident prevention education for seniors. "Seniors Helping Seniors" is the goal of the organization which operates solely with volunteers and is a member of the BC Centre for Policy Alternatives, the BC Health Coalition and The British Columbia Public Interest Advocacy Centre. The current President of COSCO is Art Kube, a former President of the BC Federation of Labour.

When the Ministry of Health's Office for Seniors was closed in 2001 by the newly elected Liberal government, one service to seniors that was lost was the Senior Citizens Counsellor program. COSCO is filling that gap with its seniors' advocates. Seniors having problems with service providers and government agencies can seek help from one of the 34 trained advocates in the province. These advocates have been successful in dealing with most issues that seniors experience, but it's been recognized that more complex cases require legal expertise. To deal with these more complex cases, COSCO is planning to appoint an Ombudsperson with that background.

## MEMBER PROFILE: SHELAGH BRENNAN

Student  
Member

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decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

My name is Shelagh Brennan and I live in Qualicum Beach. I am a RN enrolled in the Advanced Practice Leadership (Master's) program at the University of Victoria.

My qualitative research is about first person accounts of older adults who withhold information from health care professionals. Literature about withholding information is common, but literature about first person accounts is limited. After my thesis completion, by June 2008, my career goal is a position as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in gerontology on Vancouver Island.

I got involved working with older adults many years ago through home health. I am passionate about all issues of older adults not only because I work in the field but also because I am a child of parents who are in their eighties.

I work causal as a front-line nurse at a local complex care facility. I am the Membership Chair of the Gerontological Nurses Group of BC and also belong to the BC Clinical Nurse Specialist Professional Practice Group.

I heard about BCPGA from Anne Earthy. I look forward to being a member of BCPGA because it is a multi-disciplinary association and mental health of older adults needs to be addressed across the disciplines. I have volunteered for the research committee.

If you wish to contact me, my email address is [shelbren@telus.net](mailto:shelbren@telus.net).

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### A Different Kind of Conference: Combining Art with Dementia Care

The Society for the Arts in Dementia Care and The Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (INMHA) invite you to A Multi-disciplinary Conference of Arts and Sciences Creative Expression, Communication and Dementia and Mindscapes 2008, May 30-31, 2008 at the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Granville Island, Vancouver, BC. Mindscapes is an umbrella event and in conjunction with the Creative Expression Communication and Dementia Conference plays host to an exhibition of artwork produced by seniors with dementia.

For program details, location and events information, see this website: [www.cecd-society.org/2008/](http://www.cecd-society.org/2008/)

## Memory for MMSE

By: Pari Basharat, B.Sc

*The following poem was first published in the July 2007 issue of CMAJ and is reprinted here by permission of the author. Pari Basharat, a medical student at the University of Western Ontario, explains the background to the poem this way: "In geriatric assessment, I was often struck by the contradiction between conversation with these patients versus formal assessment with the Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE). Many of the patients took pride in telling of their past accomplishments, sometimes in great detail. However, their memory could be deceiving, as completion of the MMSE showed cognitive decline. I could see it, and so could they. It is difficult being witness to that moment of recognition." It's an experience that many of us have had as well.*

"Spell WORLD for me" I say.  
"As in the world you live in."

You look me in the eyes,  
Your face drawn and taught with anticipation.  
You rub your forehead,  
Slowly, thoughtfully,  
The veins on your hand shining blue  
Under the fluorescent lights of the tiny room.

I can visualize the letters forming in your mind  
Each coming out like tiny droplets...  
"W,O,R"...  
You pause.  
Your eyes meet mine  
They speak volumes...  
But I have to remain silent.  
I give you an encouraging smile,  
You shift in your chair and start over again.  
"W,O,R..."

What do I know of the world you live in?  
You are afraid to go outside for fear of falling,  
But you still enjoy playing cards with friends  
Although they come by to see you less often.  
You have not seen your son in years,  
But you live for his Christmas cards.

You throw up your hands and finish the word.  
The last letters jumbled and almost incoherent.  
You have a look in your eyes,  
Of embarrassment, defeat, frustration.  
But you manage to smile at me, as if to let me know  
It's not my fault.  
"Good," I say...  
Sounding a bit too enthusiastic...  
"Now spell WORLD backwards."

As in, the world you have lived in, backwards?  
Backwards through the years?  
But what do I know of the world you have lived in?  
Before we started this exercise,  
You told me of your early years,

Growing up in northern Ontario.  
How you met your wife over 50 years ago,  
And how you worked,  
Full days,  
To make ends meet,  
While you earned your college degree at night,  
And became a school-teacher.

But these stories could not be scored.  
I could not assign a number to your memories.  
So I had to cut you short.  
And now we sit here,  
Each trying to keep up a show of optimism with one another...  
As you struggle to spell a word  
You taught to children years ago.

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## T'ai Chi and Quality of Life

A study published in 2007 found a positive correlation between the practice of t'ai chi and quality of life among elderly Taiwanese. The aim of this cross-sectional study was to investigate the effects of TCC on the health-related quality of life (HRQOL) in the senior population.

**Methods:** Subjects who regularly practiced TCC in Taiwan were selected by random sampling and included 140 seniors (77 males and 63 females, aged 40–70 years). The questionnaire was separated into 2 parts: demographic information and the SF-36 questionnaire, which used 8 domains to evaluate the subjects' HRQOL. The results were compared with those of 560 age- and sex-matched control subjects that were taken from the general population (308 males and 252 females). Multiple regression analysis was used to compare the quality of life in each of the 8 domains between the 2 groups.

**Results:** The TCC group showed significantly higher quality-of-life scores than the control group in each of the 8 domains with the exception of the bodily pain scales. Using multiple linear regression adjusted for covariates, the TCC group had significantly higher scores in physical functioning, physical roles, general health, vitality, and social-functioning scales than the control group. In most of the domains in both the TCC group and the control group, quality of life became worse with increased age, whereas the scores in vitality and social-functioning domains of the TCC group showed a reverse trend; they remained unchanged or even improved with increased age.  
**Conclusions:** This study supports the hypothesis that TCC improves quality of life among the elderly in Taiwan, but further study must be conducted to more conclusively show the link between TCC and health-related QOL.

For the full text of this study, see: Tsung-Jung Ho, Liang Wen-Miin, Chih-Hui Lien, Tso-Chiang Ma, Hsien-Wen Kuo, Bow-Ching Chu, Hsin-Wen Chang, Jim-Shoung Lai, Jaung-Geng Lin. The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine. December 1, 2007, 13(10): 1077-1084.  
<http://www.liebertonline.com/doi/abs/10.1089/acm.2007.0518>

## Research News

### BCPGA Involved in Three Research Projects

## Membership News

Dear BCPGA Members:

The goals of the *Exploring the Impact of Cancer on Mental Health: Seniors Experiences and Perspectives* project are (1) to develop the capacity of the health care system to support the mental health needs of older Canadians with cancer, and (2) to enhance the capacity of seniors for self-care. This project will explore the experiences and perspectives of seniors with cancer and the impact of this illness on their mental health. Supporters and partners in this project include six national and three provincial organizations and stakeholders from various cancer and seniors' mental health communities.

Objectives for this project are: (1) to elicit seniors' views about challenges associated with the cancer experience, the impact on their mental health, and strategies for managing the challenges; (2) to identify how cancer care, from the perspectives of seniors, could be improved; (3) to develop and disseminate a report for health care providers that describes the challenges to mental health identified by seniors with cancer and their suggestions for system improvement; (4) to document and disseminate seniors' thoughts on how to cope with mental health challenges associated with the cancer journey, for seniors and by seniors; (5) To disseminate new knowledge, facilitate knowledge exchange and translation, and to increase awareness about the mental health needs of seniors with cancer.

This project is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (Chronic Disease Prevention and Control) for 1 year, April 1, 2008-March 31, 2009. As it proceeds, the project will bring together seniors' organizations, seniors' mental health and cancer communities to form national advisory groups; carry out an environmental scan and literature review to inform the project; conduct focus groups or individual interviews with older adults who have experienced cancer; and create, disseminate and promote uptake of the report and seniors-to-seniors document. At its conclusion, the project will produce (1) a report for health care providers to inform them of the mental health challenges seniors with cancer experience and their perspectives on how these could be addressed, (2), A seniors-to-seniors document that shares seniors' strategies for managing mental health challenges during the cancer journey.

A second national project *Promoting Seniors Mental Health in Cancer*, also funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (Chronic Disease Prevention and Control), has just been completed. The goal of this project was to develop the capacity of the health care system to support the mental health needs of older Canadians with cancer. To inform the project the Seniors Mental Health Policy Lens (also a BCPGA sponsored project) was used to frame interviews with key informants in both the cancer and mental health fields across Canada. The project then brought together seniors' organizations, seniors' mental health and cancer communities to form a national advisory expert working group to identify how issues in the care of older adults during cancer care might be addressed. The result was the creation of *Promoting Seniors Mental Health in Cancer Care: A Guide for Front Line Care Providers*. The Guide is directed at careproviders in

We want to remind members that it is renewal time again! The 2008-09 membership year started April 1, 2008. We are asking members to renew as soon as possible in order to keep bookkeeping separate from Conference registrations. Even if you are going to attend the conference, it will be helpful to send your membership renewal now to the address on the Membership Renewal Form. Please complete all the information on the form so that we can assure that the database is accurate and up-to-date.

All members should have received emails with the 2008-09 Membership Application Form attached. It is also available for download from our website ([www.bcpga.bc.ca](http://www.bcpga.bc.ca)). If you know of anyone in the field who may be interested in the BCPGA, please give them a copy of this form.

We welcome 5 new members who have joined for 2008-09! Two are from Victoria and 3 are from the Interior – Kamloops, Salmon Arm and Grand Forks. Three are Nurses, one is a Clinical Counsellor and one is a Neuropsychology student at University of Victoria.

To help strengthen our collective voice, we placed an advertisement in the March newsletter of the Gerontological Nurses Group of BC (GNGBC), encouraging their members to also join the BCPGA.

Once again, the SFU Gerontology students invited me as the BCPGA representative to their annual Wine and Cheese event. Congratulations to the students for organizing another successful event!

We are continuing to periodically feature one of our members. Thanks to Anthony Kupferschmidt for preparing a profile of Shelagh Brennan of Qualicum Beach who is a Master's student at University of Victoria. You can read about Shelagh in this edition of BC Pages. The profile is also posted on our website (click on Members, Member Profile).

Maia Kennedy  
Membership Chair and Treasurer  
[maiaiken@hotmail.com](mailto:maiaiken@hotmail.com)

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### 2009 Annual Conference

BCPGA's annual conference in 2009 will be held in the Fraser Health region, location and date yet to be chosen.

In the past the conference was usually held at the end of May; this year it is occurring at the beginning of May. If you have a preference about the date, please let one of the Board members know. Nothing is set in stone, so if you have strong preferences, please let the Board know.

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oncology, geriatrics, and in psychogeriatrics, and provides information on aging, cancer and seniors mental health. The *Guide* will be available in French and English in May 2008, and posted on the BCPGA website.

A third project is *Promoting Excellence In Dementia Care: A Dementia Policy Lens*, funded by the Alzheimer Society of BC. Partners in this provincial project are: Centre on Aging, University of Victoria Centre (Lead Agency), Alzheimer Society of BC, each of the Health Authorities and the BC Psychogeriatric Association. This project builds on what has been learned from implementing the Seniors Mental Health Policy Lens (another BCPGA sponsored project). The purpose of this research is to develop a Dementia Policy Lens (DPL) toolkit that (1) reflects the values and perspectives of older adults with dementia and of their caregivers, (2) is educative, and (3) includes an efficient tool (lens) for analyzing planned and current legislation, policies, programs and practices to determine whether they have unintended negative effects on the well being of older adults affected by dementia.

The Dementia Care Policy Lens Toolkit is expected to:

- Provide a framework for policy and program development that takes into account the values and needs of people with dementia.
- Provide a means of monitoring and reviewing the impact of changes to policies, programs and services on older adults affected by dementia.
- Promote analysis and discussion of policy and program changes on current and future older adults affected by dementia.
- Identify unintended negative effects of policies, programs and services that target older adults affected by dementia.
- Identify unintended negative effects of policies, programs and service that do not directly target older adults with a dementia, but may affect them.

Penny MacCourt is Principal Investigator and Coordinator of all three of these research projects. For more information about them, contact her at: [pmaccourt@shaw.ca](mailto:pmaccourt@shaw.ca) ph: 250-756-2129; fax 250-756-2139.

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## **Mental Health Commission of Canada Announces Key Initiatives**

February 15, 2008 the Honourable Michael Kirby, Chair of the Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC), announced the appointment of Michael Howlett as the President and CEO of the newly formed Commission. The Commission's objective is to enhance the health and social outcomes for Canadians living with mental health problems and illnesses. To achieve this goal the Commission is pursuing three key initiatives: leading the development of a national mental health strategy; creating a ten-year campaign to reduce the widespread stigma associated with mental health problems and illnesses; and establishing a Knowledge Exchange Centre to improve cross-sector communication about mental health and mental illness for all Canadians. See [www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/mhcc.html](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/mhcc.html) for more information.

## **Opinions & Comments**

### **Are BC's Seniors a Demographic Time Bomb?**

Fears that health care costs will spiral out of control as BC's population ages are greatly exaggerated, according to a new study released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. The study finds that population aging is only a small contributor to pressures on the health care budget, and that the system can be maintained and enhanced without breaking the bank. □ □

"There is no demographic time bomb waiting to go off in our health care system," says Marc Lee, Senior Economist with the CCPA and author of *Is BC's Health Care System Sustainable? A Closer Look at the Costs of Aging and Technology*. □ □ "If we are going to have a rational 'conversation' about health care in BC, we should start with the facts," says Lee. "British Columbians need to know that our health care system is financially sustainable." □ □

The study finds that:

- From 1995 to 2005, the impact of population aging on provincial health care spending was only 0.9% per year.
- To keep current service levels and accommodate future population increases, aging and inflation, health care expenditures must rise by just under 5% per year. This is very affordable in the context of reasonable economic growth.
- Even at that 5% rate of increase, provincial health care spending as a share of the provincial economy (GDP) will fall over the next 25 years.
- Health care spending as a share of GDP is currently at 7%. If the province maintains that level, not only will there be enough money to pay for existing services (even after population growth, aging and inflation), there will still be enough for modest expansion of services.

"Population aging will peak around 2031," says Lee. "We have a long time to plan for changing demographics. But the toughest cost challenges will be from technology, including new surgical techniques, diagnostics, prescription drugs and end-of-life interventions. As a province, we'll have to decide how to weigh the benefits of new innovations against their costs. And those decisions are best made in the context of a public system."

Lee rejects Finance Minister Carole Taylor's prediction that by 2017 health care costs will consume more than 70% of the provincial budget. "It's very misleading. The Finance Minister assumes huge increases in health care spending and low-balls revenues. She's also measuring the wrong thing. What matters is how much we spend on health care compared to the size of our economy, not as a share of the provincial budget."

The full report of this study is available in PDF format from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives website: [www.policyalternatives.ca](http://www.policyalternatives.ca)