Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within Continuing Care Organizations

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Research Question: How might we improve and foster a diverse, inclusive, and safe community within continuing care organizations that is built on equality for all?

Background

Within the context of continuing care settings across Canada, there is a growing need for inclusive care that recognizes and supports the diversity that exists among the older adult population and care providers. This report will be focused on enhancing DEI from both a resident and staff perspective, while taking into account the generational diversity and sensitivity of these populations. The purpose of this report is to: 1) help long-term care homes understand and better meet the needs of the diverse individuals that live, work, and visit in long-term care home; 2) to explore the issues and barriers that hinder DEI within continuing care organizations; and 3) to develop emerging initiatives to enhance DEI. More specifically, this report aims to answer the following research question: “how might we improve and foster a diverse, inclusive, and safe community within long-term care organizations that is built on equality for all?”

What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

Diversity includes the variety of unique characteristics, dimensions, and qualities that we all possess. Race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, physical abilities, and lived experiences, can all make up individual diversity (Canadian Centre for Diversity & Inclusion (CCDI), 2022).

Equity refers to everyone being treated according to their diverse needs in a way that enables everyone to participate, perform, and engage to the same extent (CCDI, 2022).

Inclusion is all about creating a culture that embraces, accepts, and respects diversity. It should be an equitable effort to meet diverse needs of individuals so that they feel valued, respected, and able to contribute their best effort to reach their full potential (CCDI, 2022).

Canada’s Long-Term Care/Continuing Care Landscape

As of 2021, there are a total of 2,076 long-term care homes across Canada (CIHI, 2021). In Canada, the aging population of seniors aged 65 and older represents 19% (over 7 million) of the total population and is projected to account for over one-fifth of the Canadian population by 2025 (Statistics Canada, 2021). Across Canada, 415,530 seniors aged 65 and older live in 5,801 long-term care (LTC) homes, representing 7% of Canada’s older adult population (Flanagan et al., 2021).

Long-Term Care: “Facilities [that] provide living accommodation for people who require on-site delivery of 24 hour, 7 days a week supervised care, including professional health services and personal care” (Health Canada, 2004).

Continuing Care: “A range of services that support the health and well-being of individuals living in their own home, a supportive living, or long-term care setting” (Alberta Health Services, n.d.).
Statistics

The aging population is not only growing, but it is also becoming more diverse.

Among all older adults in Canada,
(Government of Canada, 2021).

16,000 - 81,000 LGBTQ2S+ older adults in Alberta
(Government of Alberta, 2020).

Barriers to Enhancing DEI:

- Generational diversity
  (Personal Communication, 2022)
- Differences in power
  (Syed, 2020)
- Lack of diverse food
  (Ducak et al., 2011)
- Unconscious biases
  (Stamps, 2021)
- Language barriers
  (Bowen, 2015)
- Exclusionary language
- Lack of awareness and exposure
Impacts of Lack of DEI

- Negative impacts on job performance, satisfaction, well-being, and stress (Aysola et al., 2018).
- Racialized and LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to experience poorer health and mental health outcomes, health disparities, and poor decision-making within healthcare organizations (Stamps, 2021).
- Racialized, immigrant care workers experience racist verbal attacks and insults, sexist verbal attacks, rejection, hindering care, harassment, insinuating incompetence, and accusations (Ulusoy and Schablon, 2020).
- LGBTQ+ older adults are fearful of the misunderstanding, stigma, and discrimination they are likely to experience from care workers and residents in continuing care homes (Mozes, 2021), which leads to social isolation and remaining silent about their sexual orientations.
- Ethnically and linguistically diverse older adults are more likely to experience unequal health outcomes, unequal treatment, loneliness, fewer social interactions, and a lack of sense of community due to language barriers (Bowen, 2015).
- Weight loss and poor food intake as a result of unmet cultural food and dining preferences (Syed, 2021).

Recommendations

- Micro Initiatives: Exposure & Awareness
  - Intended to encourage residents, care workers, and visitors to engage in personal reflection and become exposed to diverse backgrounds through awareness strategies and minimal direct interaction.
    - Awareness posters
    - Immersion, celebration, and recreational activities

- Macro Initiatives: Organizational Change
  - Focused on approaches that target organizational change through exerting greater effort and direct action.
    - Policy revision
    - Ongoing training, workshops, and learning opportunities for both staff and residents
Reference


