

Going it Alone: Unbefriended Older Adults in Long Term Care

Stephanie Chamberlain and Dr Carole Estabrooks

+ Presenters



Stephanie Chamberlain, BHSc, MA

PhD Candidate

Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta



Dr Carole Estabrooks CM, PhD, RN,
FCAHS, FAAN

Professor & Canada Research Chair
(Tier 1) in Knowledge Translation

Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta

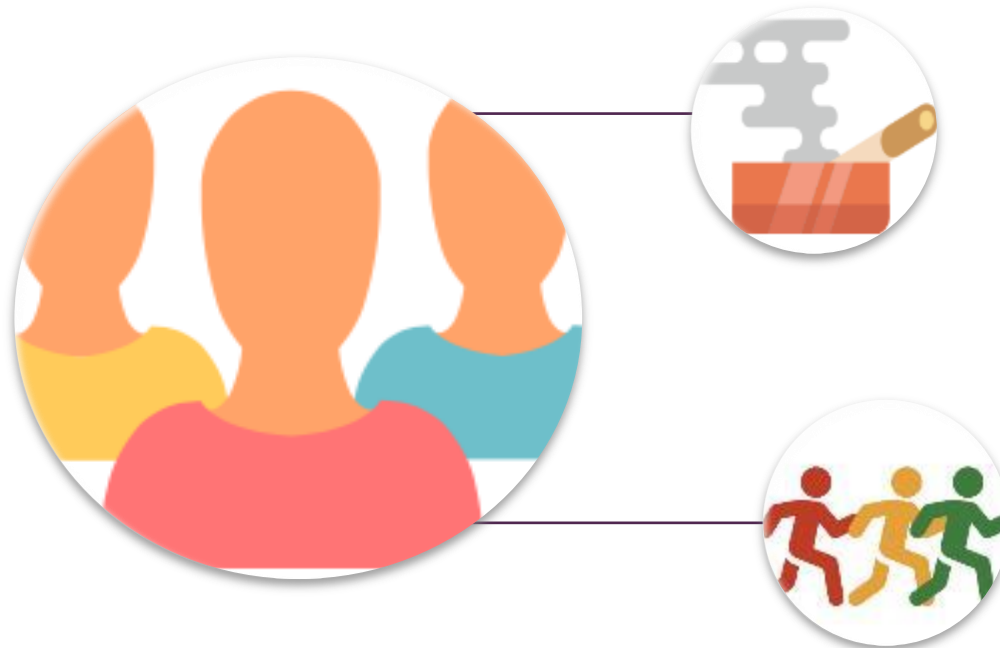
+ Presentation Overview



- Social support
- Who is ‘unbefriended’?
- Public guardianship across Canada
- Review of the literature
- Interviews with long term care staff and public guardian representatives
- Next steps

+ Social Relationships and Health

- Social isolation is defined as a state of inadequate quality and quantity of social contacts
- The links between social relationships and health are as strong as those between inactivity and smoking



+ Availability of Social Support



Family are a key source of social support

- They assist with activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily living



One-person households accounted for nearly 30% of all households in Canada¹



Living far away from family



More people living as a couple with no children

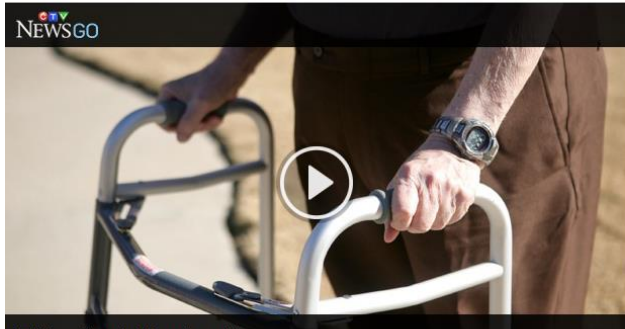
+ Aging "Alone"

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Health

HOME HEADLINES DIET AND NUTRITION FITNESS BODY AND MIND LIFESTYLE

Elder orphans: Childless, unmarried baby boomers warned to prepare for future



- CTV News Channel: Elder orphan c...
Dr. Mireille Norris are a growing pro... country.
- Canada AM: What are elder orphan...
Study author Dr. M explains how peo... can prepare them stress this puts or...
- Elderly cancer patient with no food...
An 83-year-old m... a desperate plea... dispatchers that h... food or water.

Home » Opinion



MARGARET WENTE Who cares for the elderly, if not their kids?

MARGARET WENTE
The Globe and Mail
Published Saturday, Mar. 07, 2015 8:00AM EST
Last updated Saturday, Mar. 07, 2015 8:42AM EST

My 91-year-old mother-in-law is a wonderful person, with most of her faculties reasonably intact. She lives in an assisted living home, where the care is excellent and the staff are kind. The place reminds me of a Holiday Inn, except that all the patrons are elderly and need help with the functions of everyday life – and it isn't cheap.



MARKET VIEW
Video: Market View: How baby boomers will cost each Canadian \$11,500

Although my mother-in-law gets the best of care, her quality of life is much better because she has children close at hand. My sister-in-law runs small errands, brings her books and knows her medications by heart. When something goes wrong, as it often does at that age, we're often the first to notice and make sure the problem gets dealt with promptly. My husband helps her with the television. We do her banking and buy her wine – she likes a glass with dinner – and remind the staff that she likes her bacon crispy. We know her better than anyone else ever will, and we care more.



TALKING MANAGEMENT

My husband and I don't have children. When one

The New York Times

More in: "Worst-Case" Scenario...
A Family's Shared Defeat...
To Have How Smart Dogs...
...to Be Masked by the...
...to be...
...to be...
...to be...

Near the End, It's Best to Be 'Friended'



- The New Old Age**
Pete Span... address the... challenge... for a rapidly aging population.
- Loneliness Can Be Deadly for Elders, Friends...
Are the Antidote
- You're 'Fried'? Join the Club
- Older Adults Are Still Missing Vaccinations
- They're Growing Older: Their Marriage Debt Is Growing Larger
- Going to the Emergency Room Without Learning the Linking Rules

No Tax
...to be...
...to be...
...to be...

+ Unbefriended Older Adults



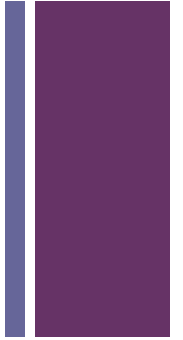
- Older adults are ‘unbefriended’ if they lack decision-making capacity and lack a person willing or able to act as their legal guardian
- Unbefriended older adults require a **public guardian** to act as their personal decision-making representative

+ Guardianship: Public and Private



- Legal mechanism that grants the authority for managing personal and/or financial responsibility in the event an individual is incapacitated.
- Guardianship effectively *de-persons* the individual—removing them of all adult rights and responsibilities
- Private guardianship: family member or friend
 - 70% guardianship petitions made by family members

+ Public Guardianship in Canada



- Offices of the Public Guardian and the Public Trustee are government organizations whose mandate is to assist adults who are incapacitated
- 18 or 19+ (provincial age of majority)
- Each provincial Office of the Public Guardian and/or Trustee has their own legislative authority

+ Research Aims



- 1. Literature Review**
- 2. Interviews with long term care staff and public guardians**
3. Province wide survey to assess number of residents with a public guardian in Alberta long term care facilities
4. Using resident administrative data to examine health and functional outcomes of unbefriended residents

+ Literature Review



- Little known about the number of older adults currently under public guardianship.
 - US estimates approximately 3-10% of older adults are unbefriended
- Neither the US or Canada maintains detailed provincial or state records about the characteristics of unbefriended
- Searched over ten thousand articles and found only 5 that described the characteristics of unbefriended older adults



Characteristics of Unbefriended Older Adults



- Older adults who use the services of a public guardian are more likely to have
 - Age-related dementia
 - Multiple chronic conditions
 - Impaired ADL's
 - Limited financial resources
- Unbefriended adults are more likely to be single, childless, and/or have fewer siblings

+ Gaps in the Literature



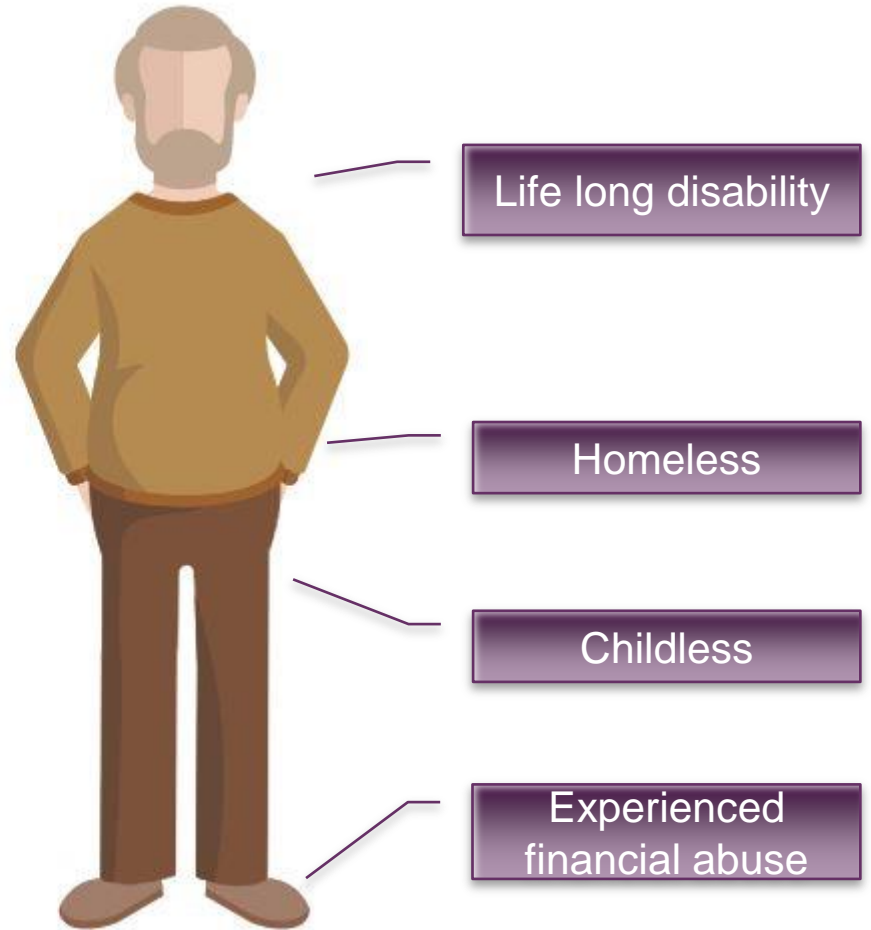
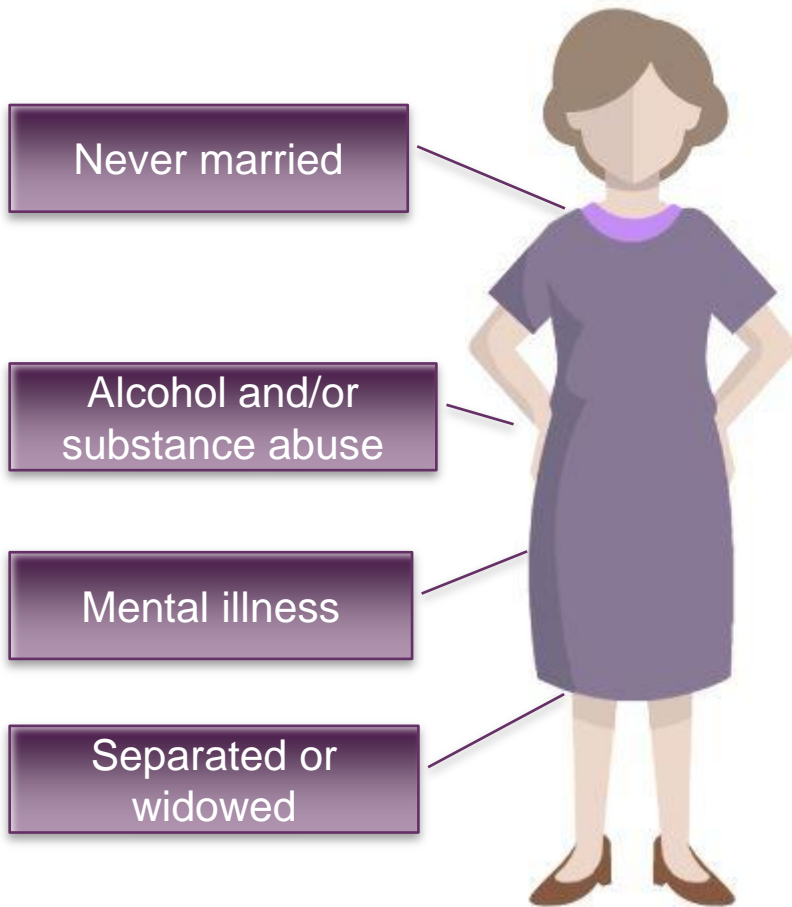
- No Canadian research
- No indication of how unbefriended individuals' health or service use compared the general population
- High risk of unmet needs among the unbefriended in residential facilities

+ Interviews



>40 interviews with care providers from across Alberta

+ Who are the Unbefriended?



+ Unbefriended Resident Characteristics



“The one’s that haven’t burnt bridges, or have had bridges burnt for them, have often suffered abuse”
(Occupational Therapist)

“They’re very difficult to place because of their Korsakoff syndrome and also because of their behaviour. So often they need to be on a secure unit”
(Public Guardian Representative)

+ Unmet Needs





- “You know, I can’t put somebody’s teeth in because they don’t have Poligrip® for them. Simple thing. But it costs money. So if we completely stop bringing in (things) for residents, can you imagine it? It would just be horrible. People with no teeth, because we can’t put them in. Raggedy clothes...We live in Canada. It makes no sense to me.” (Care Aide)

“There are lots of times we’re out of shampoo, or body wash, or deodorant. Sometimes we’re still waiting a month or two. So then we’re borrowing from other people because we don’t want out resident to smell.” (Care Aide)

+ Social Relationships



- Unbefriended residents are at high risk for loneliness and depression due to limited social interaction
- Staff at all levels agree that residents without family member support would benefit from more personalized activities and one-on-one interaction
 - Residents may have a family member guardian who is unable or unwilling to be an active member of the care team.
 - Loneliness of course is not contained among those with a public guardian

+ Measurement



- Early estimates of prevalence indicate that anywhere between 3-11% of long term care residents in Alberta have a public guardian
- Use routinely collected data to assess health outcomes and symptom burden
- Future research is needed to identify these individuals across care settings (community, assisted living, long term care) to determine prevalence and unmet care needs

+ Research Aims: Next Steps



1. Literature Review
2. Interviews with long term care staff and public guardians
3. **Province wide survey to assess number of residents with a public guardian in Alberta long term care facilities**
4. **Using resident administrative data to examine health and functional outcomes of unbefriended residents**

+ Funders



Gyro Club of Edmonton





Thank you!