

Fernanda Dal Pizzol - University of Alberta

Project: Preparedness of Informal Caregivers of an Older Adult after a Stroke: Developing the Concept and an Intervention Program



Background: Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in Canada, especially in the older population. In Canada, 7.8 million Canadians act as family and friend caregivers (herein referred to as “caregivers”) and often provide care for older adults with a health condition, such as a

stroke. However, 94% of Canadian caregivers report they need better access to support, and 31% feel incapable of caring for a stroke-affected family member. Women caregivers account for 54% of all Canadian caregivers and have historically been assigned with this role. Compared to men, women provide more care, report greater unmet health needs, and experience worse physical and mental health. Preparedness is a priority for caregivers, which influences their quality of life. However, little is known about how preparedness for men and women caregivers can be best supported.

Aim: To assess the acceptability of an intervention program designed to support preparedness of caregivers, both men and women, of older persons after a stroke.

Methods: This study is aligned with phase 2 (feasibility assessment) of the Medical Research Council framework for developing complex interventions. To understand the population perspectives, my methods include:

1. **Consultation with an advisory group.** The advisory group is composed with caregivers' partners, healthcare professionals experienced with stroke, and representatives from caregivers and stroke organizations. The group will refine the research, develop strategic forms of recruitment, and discuss dissemination activities and products that are useful to clinicians and caregivers.
2. **Explanatory mixed methods study.** To assess acceptability of the intervention, I will engage caregivers of older adults after a stroke and healthcare professionals who deliver services to this group of patients. **Recruitment and sampling:** Forty caregivers and 40 healthcare providers will be included in the first (quantitative) phase. Of these individuals, 20-24 caregivers and 20-24 healthcare providers will be invited to complete the second (qualitative) phase. Recruitment will involve advertising in newsletters targeting caregivers, seniors, and stroke patients. I will sample purposively to include equal numbers of men/women. **Data collection:** Based on the findings from my previous studies (i.e., concept analysis and systematic review), and following consultation with the advisory group, I will develop a detailed description of the goals, components, activities, mode of delivery, and dosage of one or more potential interventions aimed at promoting preparedness. In an online survey, participants will be presented with this description of the intervention(s) and asked to rate its acceptability using a validated measure. Additionally, participants will be asked to complete a demographic data form, including information on gender identities. In the second qualitative phase, eight focus groups will be conducted to further explore and elucidate the reasons underlying the observed patterns in the acceptability ratings. **Analysis:** Descriptive statistics and content analysis will be conducted to analyze quantitative and qualitative data, respectively. Additionally, a gender-based analysis of the qualitative data will be completed to understand how perspectives of preparedness differ between caregivers who identify as men and women.

Anticipated outcomes: This research will produce an intervention design that is crafted in collaboration with end-users (i.e., the caregivers themselves). The ultimate goal of this research is to find novel and appropriate ways to support caregivers and advance the health and wellbeing of Canadian caregivers of older adults after stroke, as well as their care recipients.

Bio

Fernanda Dal Pizzol (she/her) is a registered nurse with more than 10 years of experience in clinical, volunteer, and research work focused on family and friends' caregiving of older adults, particularly those affected by stroke. Fernanda completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Masters in Nursing at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS, Brazil) and was a visiting honors nursing student at Monash University (Australia). Currently, she is a PhD Candidate in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta under the supervision of Dr. Hannah O'Rourke and Dr. Kathleen Hunter. Fernanda's doctoral research focuses on designing an intervention program to support the preparedness of informal caregivers, both men and women, of older adults after a stroke. Outside academia, Fernanda finds inspiration and support from her caring husband, her lovely 1-year-old daughter, and the brave stories of many caregivers she has had the privilege of encountering.