

Simran Panesar – University of Alberta

Project: Designing a culturally sensitive management program for urinary incontinence in older Sikh women in Edmonton, Alberta

Background:



Urinary incontinence (UI), defined as the involuntary loss of urine, is a distressing symptom that is common in women, as pregnancy and delivery are major risk factors for its development. The detection and treatment of UI remains under-prioritized, leading to excess and potentially avoidable morbidity. Further, culture can play a significant role in shaping one's world view, perspectives, and health-seeking behaviors. We know little about older Sikh women's cultural attitudes and beliefs regarding UI. Thus, this study seeks to address the current knowledge gap in cultural attitudes, beliefs, and self-management practices regarding UI in older Sikh women. The objective of this study is to explore the cultural perspectives of older Sikh women regarding UI through a community-based participatory research paradigm, consisting of a qualitative study and the co-designing of a culturally sensitive management program for UI.

Our team has been collaborating with enthusiastic Sikh community partners, to explore how Sikh women view UI from a cultural perspective, and to co-design study materials which are tailored to the needs and interests of the Sikh community. A key learning from these engagement efforts has been regarding the importance of multi-generational engagement in establishing trust and starting conversations on older women's health, particularly in immigrant communities. These learnings have been integrated in our research efforts and study design, such as by engaging youth-led Sikh organizations to connect with older women through their networks. The older women in our study will take part in semi-structured interviews exploring awareness, knowledge, cultural attitudes and beliefs on UI, and current management practices. Acknowledging varying levels of literacy, the questionnaires will be facilitated in their language of choice (e.g., Punjabi). The interviews will be digitally recorded, translated, transcribed verbatim, and coded using thematic analysis. The data from these interviews will be reviewed

and collapsed into categories and themes, bringing light to the older Sikh women's cultural views on UI. Further, we will leverage findings from the qualitative interviews and meet with our advisory group regularly, to co-design an evidence-based management program for UI in older Sikh women.

BIO

I am currently pursuing a master's in medicine degree at the University of Alberta (UofA), my supervisor is Dr. Adrian Wagg and co-supervisor is Dr. Andrea Gruneir. I earned my bachelor's of science degree in honours physiology from the UofA. My research and health advocacy interests are in women's health and in taking an intersectional approach to addressing health disparities, such as for immigrant communities.

Over the course of my post-secondary career at the UofA, I have been involved with several leadership initiatives, including serving as president of a women's health advocacy group, co-founding a men's health group, and planning student events to promote mental health. For my master's research, I am investigating the role of culture in shaping the attitudes and beliefs of older Sikh women regarding urinary incontinence (UI). Given my background in research and advocacy, it is my vision to serve diverse populations and promote the health of all people.