

OVER 8 MILLION CANADIANS (1 IN 4) are providing unpaid care to support someone with diminishing physical ability, debilitating cognitive condition or a chronic life-limiting illness. Carers (also known as caregivers or family caregivers) come from all walks of life— all ages, all genders and all income levels. They are students, employees and retirees. Whether it's a sudden onset or a gradual transition, caring impacts an individual's life physically, emotionally, socially and financially.¹

CONNECTING CARERS is a campaign to raise awareness of carers' needs and the importance of connecting and accessing supports earlier rather than later in their care journeys.

CONNECTING caregivers to health care providers so they know what to expect and are supported in their role on the health care team. Building and maintaining these connections is important because:

Caregivers are essential partners in care.

They help with medical tasks, personal care, supervision and a multitude of daily activities that save the health care system an estimated \$66.5 billion annually.²

Caregiver and patient well-being are connected.

Supporting caregivers' health improves the care recipients' outcomes and enables them to remain at home longer with a better quality of life.³

CONNECTING caregivers to health policy planners, researchers and product developers so their knowledge and experiences influence the development of caregiver-centred health and social supports. Building and maintaining these connections is important because:

Caregivers are experts in their own needs and caring roles.

Carers provide a unique perspective on the issues that impact their lives. Involving them in co-designing policies and products ensures solutions are realistic and beneficial.⁴

Caregivers bring skills and lived experiences.

Involving carers in research and development grounds the process and results towards what matters most to carers.⁴

CONNECTING caregivers to community resources so they can access the supports they need. Building and maintaining these connections is important because:

Caregivers have different information and support needs.

Carers respond to the changing needs of care recipients throughout their care journey. Quick and easy access to reliable and trustworthy information is important to carers.^{5,6}

Caregivers have a broad range of holistic needs.

Carers juggle personal, health, family, emotional, financial and social needs. Connecting with community-based resources such as adult day programs, respite care and other support programs help ease the strain of caring.⁷



USING TECHNOLOGY TO CONNECT
Digital health solutions such as telehomecare, e-booking, e-views and personal health records connect caregivers and care recipients with others on the health care team.^{8,9}



USING TECHNOLOGY TO CONNECT
Creating virtual registries and private online consultation forums connect caregivers to clinical trials, research, product development and policy planning.



USING TECHNOLOGY TO CONNECT
Web-based resources for finding and accessing information and services, virtual training, e-requests for prescriptions and virtual social support help caregivers stay connected.⁹

(1) Statistics Canada. 2013. Portraits of Caregivers (2) Personal communication with Janet Fast (University of Alberta). March 19, 2017. Based on unpublished analysis of Statistics Canada 2012 General Social Survey (3) Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2017, Seniors in Transition: Exploring Pathways Across the Care Continuum (4) Eales, J. Fast, J. & Boger, J. (2018). Designing technology that cares: Using caregivers' experiences to drive the design process. Edmonton and Waterloo: University of Alberta, Research on Aging, Policies and Practice (RAPP) and Schlegel-University of Waterloo Research Institute for Aging (RIA) (5) Boger, J. 2017. An online resource system for caregivers of persons with dementia. Assistive Technology for carers: Pathways to Innovation Symposium Presentation to the International Carers Conference, Adelaide Australia, October 5, 2017 (6) Statistics Canada. 2015. The Information Need of Informal Caregivers Involved in Providing Support to a Critically Ill Loved One (7) RAPP. 2015. A Snapshot of Canadians Caring for Persons with Dementia: The Toll it Takes (8) Canada Health Infoway. 2016. Connecting Patients for Better Health: 2016 (9) AARP. 2016. Caregivers & Technology: What They Want and Need.

Learn more on how AGE-WELL is supporting caregivers through research and technology: <http://agewell-nce.ca/research/research-themes-and-projects/workpackage-2>

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