**Purpose:**
Home & community care providers, and long-term care staff may not be prepared to provide the support that older adults living with HIV need to manage chronic illness and cope with disability. Continuing education on HIV and aging for workers in these settings is not currently mandated by provincial & territorial governments which calls into question the quality of aging-related care older adults with HIV can expect to receive.

The purpose of this brief is to raise awareness among provincial and territorial Ministers of Health about gaps in training for aging care providers and to stimulate discussion about how to address these through policy change.

**Analysis:**
Provincial and territorial regulations and standards describing mandatory training for the staff of home and community care and long-term care settings currently do not require education on:
(A) The mental health-related quality of life of older adults
(B) Non-stigmatizing communication and/or care practices
(C) How to operationalize the rights guaranteed to service users under the law
This is especially problematic when it comes to ensuring equitable access to aging care for marginalized groups of older adults, including those living with HIV.

Existing regulations are also too vague about the topics to be covered by in-service training, leaving decisions about curriculum to the discretion of the health authority, organization, institution, or even the provider themselves. Individual decision-makers may hold their own biases about marginalized groups of older adults that influence the training topics they do or do not prioritize.

**Recommended Policy Responses:**
Provincial and territorial Ministries of Health should amend their regulations and standards to mandate that all home and community care and long-term care staff receive comprehensive orientation and in-service training at regular intervals to ensure they possess the competencies required to address pressing health and social issues affecting older adults. These include, but may not be limited to:
(A) HIV and aging
(B) Healthy sexuality across the life course using a comprehensive approach that addresses rights to sexual self-expression, pleasure, sexual function and prevention of sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections
(C) Stigma and discrimination
(D) Inclusive communication
(E) Mental and emotional health, including how to recognize and respond to emotional distress & minority stress
(F) Loneliness and isolation

Sufficient release time funding should be provided for all staff to be trained in these core competencies without taking time away from client care.
Common Briefing Note: Foundational Training for Providers of Aging Care

Provincial and territorial governments should work with the health regulatory colleges and health professional associations in their jurisdiction to ensure that: approved health education programs and vocational standards prepare regulated and unregulated healthcare workers to respond respectfully and competently to the mental health and social needs of minority populations; and that best practice guidelines for HIV care across the life course are developed and updated regularly for all healthcare providers.

Key Background Information:

Aging with HIV is the new reality. Over 25,000 people living with HIV in Canada are now over the age of 50, and membership in this group is increasing exponentially. Many older adults living with HIV anticipate needing support with personal care, activities of daily living, and chronic disease management as they age with chronic disease. Commonly these individuals find themselves without informal caregivers necessitating reliance on formal aging care and services. Uncertainty about how they will be treated in aging care settings is a major source of anxiety.

“The survey results indicate we are doing a good job in training staff to be competent in undertaking the tasks of care, but we may be falling short in ensuring care staff are equipped at understanding how to meet the emotional & social needs of residents.” (Office of the Seniors’ Advocate, BC, 2017)

Attachments:

Championing Healthy Public Policy for Older Adults Living with HIV in Canada (2018)

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Aging with HIV is the new reality. The same old responses won’t do.