

The Journey Ahead

realize

**FOSTERING
POSITIVE CHANGE
FOR PEOPLE LIVING
WITH HIV AND OTHER
EPISODIC DISABILITIES**

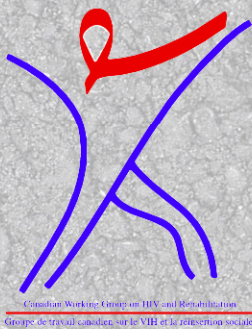
**Annual Report
2015 - 2016**

Join us on our journey ahead

Please help **realize** to help others – and spread the word.

- * Be a **realize** advocate and tell someone about our work.
- * Send us a note about how involvement with **realize** has touched your life.
- * Be a friend of **realize** and consider becoming a monthly donor.

We have rebranded!



is now

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realize

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Established 1998, Incorporated 2002
Charitable registration number 85699 5535 RR0001

Message from the Co-Chairs

This year has been one of reflection, and anticipation, for CWGHR.

An organization's name should accurately reflect that organization and its mission at any given moment in time. Coming up on our 18th year, it was clearly time to consider whether our name truly conveys who we are.

The Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation (CWGHR) has been evolving and reflecting for some time. While we remain a forward-looking organization dedicated to improving the lives of people living and aging with HIV, we now consistently include other episodic disabilities in our thinking. We also know that our work reaches well beyond Canadian borders, and that our membership is now much more than a "working group" implies; we are a strong national network and internationally recognized organization.

Simply put, we realized that our vision and mission had outgrown our name. We believe that **realize** is a more apt choice as we look toward the future and foster positive change for people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities.

Our journey to this point has brought many successes, and has revealed challenges requiring leadership and innovation. We are proud to share with you some of the stories from this journey in this summary report.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we would like to take this opportunity to thank our funders, donors, partners, members, volunteers and fellow Board members for your support and dedication. We would also like to thank the incredible staff for their commitment and determination in fostering positive change for people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities.

We'd like to personally invite you to join **realize** on the journey ahead. We are proud to be leaders and innovators in the movement to improve the lives of those living with HIV and other episodic disabilities, and we need your support as we move forward.

**-David Salter and Dave Skitch
Co-Chairs, Board of Directors**





Access to Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is an integral component of the HIV care, and treatment continuum when it comes to maximizing quality of life. CWGHR is working to raise awareness of the role of rehabilitation in the lives of people living with HIV, and other chronic health conditions using creative, accessible methods.

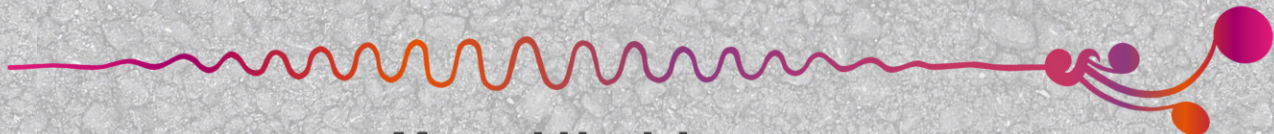
This year, we produced a 3-minute video showcasing the value of rehabilitation in the context of chronic conditions. We now have a new resource in our toolbox which can be used to inspire rehabilitation faculty, students and professionals, community-based HIV organizations, and the broader public to get behind the idea of equitable access to rehabilitation.

As we work to develop the Pan-Canadian Access to Rehabilitation Network, a community where people come together discuss issues related to rehabilitation and access, we continue to find new allies.

We worked with the Physiotherapy Association of British Columbia to publish an article on HIV and rehabilitation for practitioners. We catalyzed new relationships between universities and community-based HIV organizations willing to host occupational therapy practicum placements, and we are planning the first physiotherapy practicum at a community-based HIV organization.

“Without the [...] therapy, I wouldn't be where I am now. I wouldn't be able to deal with some of the stuff that I can deal with.”

-Andrew,
Person Living with HIV



Mental Health

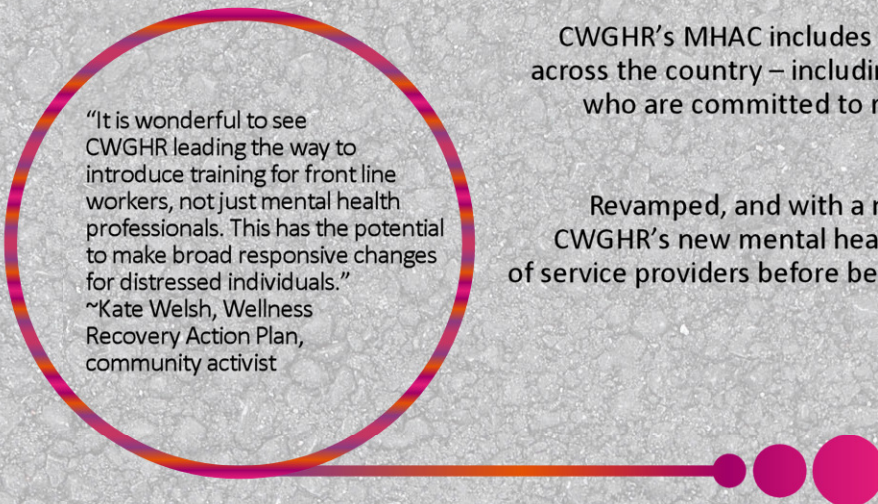
This year, CWGHR's Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) continued to make a positive impact on our mental health program work by helping us to refine and refocus our mental health workshop.

CWGHR's MHAC includes experts in mental health and/or HIV from across the country – including researchers, clinicians, and educators - who are committed to re-envision how mental health permeates all of our work.

Revamped, and with a new focus on vital communications skills, CWGHR's new mental health workshop will be piloted with a range of service providers before being offered more broadly across Canada.

“It is wonderful to see CWGHR leading the way to introduce training for front line workers, not just mental health professionals. This has the potential to make broad responsive changes for distressed individuals.”

~Kate Welsh, Wellness Recovery Action Plan, community activist





Workforce & Income Support

In 2015-2016, CWGHR saw a dramatic increase in the recognition of workplace rights and needs of people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities. CWGHR has continued to facilitate research, education and policy change to better understand and address the employment needs of people in this community.

This year, CWGHR hosted an Episodic Disabilities and Insurance Roundtable bringing together employers, insurance companies, people living with episodic disabilities, and health sector representatives to discuss possible solutions to the difficulties employees with episodic disabilities face. As part of a coalition of 90 non-profit organizations, CWGHR helped develop the ground-breaking

“CWGHR’s work on employment is critical. There are wider benefits of accommodating employees with episodic disabilities. Employers retain much needed expertise and avoid the need for rehiring and retraining and employees maintain their important connection to the workforce.”

-Deanna Matzanke,
Strategic HR and Diversity
Professional and Lawyer



Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP) report, titled *Leaving Some Behind: What Happens When Workers Get Sick*. This report articulates the range of issues confronting people living with episodic disabilities. Internationally, CWGHR raised awareness about these issues as host of a civil society side event at the 9th Session of the UN’s Conference of States Parties to the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

CWGHR has developed and will debut innovative educational resources, including an exciting new online training for managers and supervisors working with employees with episodic disabilities.

This year marked a turning point in the wider awareness of episodic disabilities, and CWGHR remains dedicated to addressing the employment and income security needs of people living with HIV and other episodic disabilities.



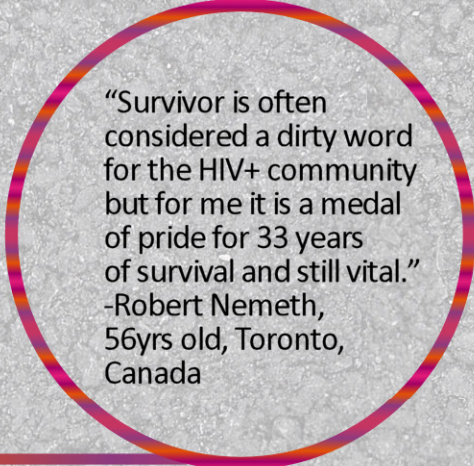
Aging with HIV

CWGHR’s commitment to raising awareness of the issues relevant to people aging with HIV was unwavering in 2015-2016. Our familiarity with the research evidence, programs, and policies relating to older adults living with and vulnerable to HIV was widely sought and, wherever possible, we upped the impact of our workshops by involving older adults living with HIV as co-presenters.


This year we continued to prepare carers within seniors’ services to respond to the diverse, and sometimes distinct, needs of this aging cohort. We developed interactive online learning modules on HIV and older adults which resonated deeply with service providers in Winnipeg, Toronto and Halifax where it was pilot tested.

The National Coordinating Committee on HIV and Aging, for which CWGHR serves as secretariat, reached over 250,000 Twitter users with a massive social media campaign on HIV and older adults in the lead up to World AIDS Day 2015.

CWGHR’s annual meeting of the minds, our Think Tank, was focused on financial security among people aging with HIV. Social drivers of poverty shared in common by seniors, people living with HIV, and other vulnerable communities were unveiled and reinforced CWGHR’s dedication to cross-sectoral partnerships.



“Survivor is often considered a dirty word for the HIV+ community but for me it is a medal of pride for 33 years of survival and still vital.”
-Robert Nemeth,
56yrs old, Toronto,
Canada



realize

Elisse Zack Award for Excellence in HIV and Rehabilitation

2015 Recipient: **Dr. Kelly O'Brien**

Dr. Kelly O'Brien has been a clinician, researcher and advocate focusing on rehabilitation in the context of HIV since 1998 when she was one of the first physiotherapists in Canada developing and delivering rehabilitation services for people living with HIV.

"Kelly's achievements, passion and excellence in HIV and rehabilitation have truly advanced the field over a sustained period of years. She is a treasure to our community and we can think of no one more deserving of The Elisse Zack Award for Excellence in HIV and Rehabilitation!"

-nomination letter of support



Our sincerest thanks

Many people, including our deeply committed Board of Directors, staff, members, donors, and partners have contributed to our success.

Funders including the M·A·C AIDS Fund and the Public Health Agency of Canada, make our work possible.

