



Covenant Health
Network of Excellence in
Seniors' Health and Wellness



Conversation Circles Summary – August 31, 2016

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“It’s not if, it’s when
you will be a family
caregiver.”

- Nadine Henningsen, President, Carers Canada



Supporting Family Caregivers of Seniors within Acute and Continuing Care Systems – Symposium 2016

- ✓ Attendees considered how to best involve and support family caregivers in the healthcare setting, including discussions on:
 - Practices
 - Policies
 - Culture
 - System change
- ✓ Attendees contributed their input into conversation circles to identify:
 - Current issues surrounding family caregivers
 - Recommendations for improving family caregiver involvement and experiences



Conversation Circles

- Attendees explored six topics in the conversation circles:
 - Orientation and Education of Healthcare Providers to Increase Understanding of Caregiver Needs and How to Assist Them
 - Culture Change Needed within our Systems to Acknowledge, Respect and Honour Family Caregivers
 - Supports Needed to Engage, Empower and Foster the Resilience of Family Caregivers
 - Tools and Processes Available to Help Identify and Assess Caregiver Burden
 - Palliative Care and End of Life Supports Desired by Family Caregivers
 - Systems Change Needed from a Policy and Practice Perspective to Ensure that Family Caregiver Supports and Resources are Made Available



Key Input from Attendees

- Expand awareness amongst healthcare providers of the vital role family caregivers play and their need for supports
- Develop mechanisms and tools to improve communications between healthcare providers and family caregivers
- Involve and engage family caregivers in care decisions
- Co-design education and training for healthcare providers





1. Orientation and Education of Healthcare Providers to Increase Understanding of Caregiver Needs and How to Assist Them

Issues

- Limited education and training for healthcare providers
- Different education and training for acute and continuing care settings
- Family caregivers not recognized or valued as part of the care team
- Communication is impacted by the lack of recognition or value

Recommendations

- Educate healthcare providers
- Use similar approaches and training across care settings
- Develop communication skills in healthcare providers





2. Culture Change Needed within our Systems to Acknowledge, Respect and Honour Family Caregivers

Issues

- Time pressures leave little time to engage with family caregivers
- System is dominated by a medical model

Recommendations

- Move to a person and family centered approach
- Welcome family caregivers in to our care settings





3. Supports Needed to Engage Empower and Foster the Resilience of Family Caregivers

Issues

- Lack of information and supports
- Healthcare providers lack the knowledge on how to engage, empower and foster resilience
- Healthcare providers are not aware of current resources



Recommendations

- Healthcare providers needs to be proactive in their support:
 - Develop and maintain a list of resources
 - Create a provincial strategy
 - Helping family caregivers to navigate the system



4. Tools and Processes Available to Help Identify and Assess Caregiver Burden

Issues

- Inconsistencies in identifying and assessing family caregiver stress/burden
- Healthcare providers not adequately or consistently trained to identify stress/burden
- Conducting multiple caregiver burden assessments is problematic

Recommendations

- Acknowledge family caregiver stress/burden
- Train healthcare providers to identify family caregiver stress/burden
- Build systems and mechanisms for follow-up including supports





5. Palliative Care and End of Life Supports Desired by Family Caregivers

Issues

- Healthcare providers are not trained to support patients and family caregivers at end of life
- Healthcare providers are not aware of the palliative and end of life resources available

Recommendations

- Educate healthcare providers about palliative care and end of life supports
- Train healthcare providers to communicate with patients and family caregivers about end of life





6. System Change Needed from a Policy and Practice Perspective to Ensure that Family Caregiver Supports and Resources are Made Available

Issues

- Current family caregiver support policies and programs:
 - have a narrow approach
 - do not provide adequate financial support
- Legal constraints prohibit family caregivers from obtaining necessary health information



Recommendations

- Develop comprehensive policies that cover all family caregiver needs
- Collaborate with family caregivers to develop programs and policies that identify financial resources and supports
- Change legislation related to privacy so family caregivers can access the health information needed



Next Steps

Later this afternoon we will focus on specific ways to help family caregivers feel supported and valued in their caregiving role.

Current supports do not adequately compensate family caregivers and they often end up giving and giving until they have nothing left.

- Attendee to *Supporting Family Caregivers of Seniors within Acute and Continuing Care Systems*, 2016

