

themselves and their families, and expressed empathy and concern for their residents. They described burnout due to increased workloads and the emotional burden of caring for residents facing isolation, illness, and death. Respondents cited the presence or lack of organizational communication and teamwork as factors influencing their ability to work under challenging circumstances. They also described the demoralizing impact of negative media coverage of nursing homes, contrasting this with the heroic public recognition given to hospital staff. These challenges added significant burden to an already strained workforce and are likely to contribute to increased burnout, turnover, and staff shortages in the long-term.

EARLY LEARNING FROM THE HEALTHY END OF LIFE PROJECT (HELP) OTTAWA IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID-19

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Healthy End of Life Project (HELP) Ottawa is a community-based participatory research initiative which is based in four community sites in Ottawa, Ontario (Canada) (2 community health centers, and 2 faith communities). Focused on the needs of people who are frail, living with advanced illness, and their caregivers, including the needs of people who are bereaved, HELP Ottawa strives to, 1) strengthen informal and community social networks, organizational cultures and linkages across local health and social care services; 2) create a community culture that supports people to build social care networks to be able to ask for and accept help, and, 3) mobilize and prepare community members to be confident and capable of offering and providing help to people in their communities. Unfolding within the context of COVID-19, each HELP Ottawa site has found ways to mobilize, adapt and respond to lockdowns, quarantines, increased isolation and altered needs and services. Drawing on 89 initial consultations, followed by 111 interviews and 16 focus group participants (n=164), qualitative findings speak to the heightened grief and fear experienced within each site during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the multiple costs of severed 'essential' links. Critically highlighted is the need to build and sustain social supports and connection through everyday and local means while also integrating technology and online communication. Further apparent are the critical questions that need to be asked about how compassionate communities, and communities at large, can prepare for and respond to current and future waves of COVID-19.

HEALTH EQUITY IMPACTS OF COVID-19 POLICIES ON DEMENTIA-RELEVANT COMMUNITY SERVICES: A SGBA+ POLICY SCAN

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This presentation shares the methodology and early findings from a policy scan conducted to understand and assess the impact of COVID-19 policies on dementia care in the community for diverse populations in the province of Nova Scotia, Canada. The scan provided baseline information on: 1) Provincial legislative and regulatory policies related to dementia care in the community; 2) Orders and legislation enacted in response to COVID-19 that potentially impact those policies. Information was obtained from publicly accessible databases and government websites. Searches were also conducted using Google. 135 Acts were collected and reviewed. A specific aim of the scan was to generate knowledge about the impact of these layered policies in the context of a public health crisis from the perspective of local socially and geographically marginalized communities. A Sex and Gender Based Analysis Plus analytical approach was used to assess potential health equity impacts of COVID-19 policies on dementia care in the community. Information was organized using an adapted Health Equity Impact Assessment tool and Systems Health Equity Lens. Strengths and limitations of the approach and tools are discussed.

VIRTUAL FUNERALS DURING COVID-19 AND BEYOND

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Physical distancing measures and the restrictions on large group gatherings following the COVID-19 pandemic have left many to consider alternative approaches to commemorating the death of a loved one. Advancements in information technologies and the availability of affordable electronic devices have brought forth the ability to use virtual platforms to host funeral services for those unable to be with their loved ones. The aim of this study was to identify existing and potential online platforms for hosting a virtual funeral, explore the safety considerations of hosting a service during the pandemic and share the experiences of individuals who have previously hosted a virtual service. To conduct the research, an environmental scan was undertaken searching academic, grey literature and online websites. The results showed that there are currently several online platforms made specifically for virtual services and many free public platforms that can be used. Death services must ensure staff who are in direct contact with the deceased have proper Personal Protective Equipment and companies must adhere to regulations regarding group gatherings, screening for symptoms and physical distancing. Some individuals expressed having a positive experience, stating that the virtual service felt more intimate, while others expressed difficulty in navigating the technology, particularly the older adult attendees. Virtual funeral services may prove to be a practical and safer alternative during COVID-19 and may provide some comfort for those facing such challenging times. By examining existing platforms and their use, an opportunity exists to generate recommendations for additional supports, particularly for older adults.