

Tucson, Arizona, United States, 3. University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, United States

As the number of people affected by dementia increases, it is essential that caregivers are provided resources and communities educated on how to engage and support people living with dementia. Supporting caregivers and providing education about dementia-friendly communities are key components of the Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Programs. This symposium will provide examples of GWEP projects which foster dementia-friendly communities and support caregivers. Additionally, recent and current legislation targeting dementia and caregivers will be presented.

HUBS OF INNOVATION: GWEP UTILIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR TRAINING AND SERVICE DELIVERY

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Technology offers powerful tools for meeting the increasing needs of older adults and caregivers. The Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program recognizes the important role technology will play in service delivery and training by fostering innovation to meet local training and healthcare needs. This symposium will review the innovative models and strategies GWEPs are utilizing to improve care including Project ECHO, remote monitoring, and telehealth. The policy implications of these models will be presented, including current legislative action to support technology and innovation in the care of older adults.

SESSION 1535 (SYMPOSIUM)

INTEREST GROUP SESSION—LONELINESS AND SOCIAL ISOLATION: THE LANGUAGE(S) OF LONELINESS

Chair: Christina Victor, Brunel University London, Uxbridge, Middlesex, United Kingdom
Discussant: Kimberley Smith, University of Surrey, Guildford, Surrey, Canada

We offer a novel perspective on the burgeoning literature focused on loneliness later life by examining the language(s) used to describe, define and depict loneliness. We have an extensive body of work describing the prevalence of , 'vulnerability factors' and consequences of loneliness in later life. These activities start with pre-defined concepts of what loneliness is and often use scales and questions which may/may not use the term loneliness. How well does the contemporary language of loneliness used in research, policy, practice and the media really capture the depth and complexity of what people are experiencing? Do the terms and words use in our measurement scales and quantitative research resonate with this vocabulary? In qualitative research interviews how do older adults talk (or avoid talking) about loneliness? How does the media talk about loneliness and what images does

this convey about later life? We will address these three issues in our seminar. Using data from qualitative interviews undertaken as part of a mixed methods study of temporal variations in loneliness, Thomas uncovers the strategies participants used to talk or avoid talking about loneliness. Victor uses qualitative data from 12,000 adults aged 60+ collected as part of the BBC loneliness experiment to examine the terms used to describe loneliness and to identify both the opposite of loneliness and the positive aspects of loneliness. Sullivan exposes how loneliness is constructed in print and digital media over a 10-year period in the UK and Canada and its role in framing the loneliness problem.

WHAT IS LONELINESS: INSIGHTS FROM THE BBC LONELINESS EXPERIMENT

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Older peoples' views on what defines loneliness are conspicuous by their absence. The BBC Loneliness Experiment included 3 free-text questions which aimed to address this gap in our knowledge. Participants were asked to define what loneliness meant to them; their understanding of the opposite of loneliness and if loneliness could be positive and why. There were 55,000 survey responses:12,000 aged 60+. The 'top five' loneliness definition were: having no one to talk to; feeling disconnected from the world; feeling left out; sadness and feeling misunderstood. The most common terms used to describe the opposite of loneliness were: being connected; contentment with social relationships; happiness; friendship and availability of people. Almost 50% reported that loneliness could be positive as did 16% of those who were often/always lonely with the reasons given for this including opportunities for personal growth, the enjoyment of being alone and knowledge that the feeling would pass

"BUT WE ARE NOT POWERLESS AGAINST THIS PROBLEM": OLDER PEOPLE, LONELINESS AND THE MEDIA

Mary Pat Sullivan¹, 1. Nipissing University, North Bay, Ontario, Canada

Media campaigns play a critical role in framing public perceptions or 'public talk' around social issues. The media's role in characterizing the loneliness 'problem' is, however, an under explored area. This paper presents the language of loneliness and loneliness representations in the media in Canada and England over a 10-year period (2009-2018) and their relationship with key policy initiatives specific to an ageing population. Using qualitative content analysis, the findings illustrate the use of skilled marketing techniques and highly stigmatizing discourse. These media approaches act to: (1) reinforce the threat of an ageing population; (2) endorse responsabilization and governmentality of the body; and (3) promote individual and/or family shame and morally responsible actions by charities and volunteers. We conclude that there is a need for a critical analysis of loneliness from the perspective of social and cultural constructions of ageing, the positioning of older people in society, and neo-liberalist ideology