

among these populations. Part of a symposium sponsored by the Qualitative Research Interest Group.

### HOMELESS ON MAIN STREET: USING PHOTOVOICE TO HIGHLIGHT OLDER ADULTS AMONG THE HIDDEN HOMELESS

H. Shellae Versey, *Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut, United States*

Homelessness is a reality for a growing number of Americans living in small towns and rural areas. However, unlike in cities, housing instability may be less visible. Using a photo-elicitation method (i.e., Photovoice), this study explores the meaning of place and obscured visibility to currently and formerly homeless older adults living in a small town in central Connecticut.

Participants (N = 27) were recruited from a local service agency, given cameras and asked to photograph areas around town that were meaningful to them. Photographs were developed and followed by in-person, semi-structured interviews with participants in which photos and experiences during the project were discussed. Primary themes included belonging, generativity, social isolation, and place-making as meaning-making. The study culminated in a community photography exhibition in which photographs from the project were displayed in public spaces around town. Implications for community-based interventions to reach homeless groups in rural areas are discussed. Part of a symposium sponsored by the Qualitative Research Interest Group.

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## SESSION 6305 (SYMPOSIUM)

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### TRANSFORMING GERONTOLOGICAL RESEARCH BY MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING PERSONS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

Chair: Michael Lepore

Discussant: Richard Fortinsky

Whereas persons living with dementia have commonly been subjects of gerontological research, participation of persons with dementia in designing and conducting studies and in scientific research meetings has been rare in the United States. In recent years, person-centered research models have arisen which give persons with dementia and their caregivers core roles in the research enterprise. As “co-researchers” with academic/professional researchers, persons with dementia and their caregivers are engaged in all aspects of the research enterprise, jointly developing research questions and study designs, collecting and analyzing data, planning research meetings, and disseminating results. International studies have shown that conducting research in collaboration with the population that is being studied has potential to enhance the quality and appropriateness of research and has been identified as an essential component of studies examining the effectiveness of different approaches to care. This session spotlights innovative advances in gerontological research that meaningfully engages persons with dementia. First, the engagement of persons with dementia in scientific meetings is addressed

drawing on the examples of the 2017 and 2020 National Research Summits on Care Services and Supports for Persons with Dementia and their Caregivers (i.e., Summits). Next, a study using a patient engagement framework for caregivers and individuals with mild cognitive impairment living at home is discussed. Finally, the Empowering Partnerships program, which prepares researchers, persons with dementia, and care partners to collaborate in conducting research is reviewed. Outcomes and challenges of these innovations are examined, and the need for academic/professional researcher roles to evolve is discussed.

### RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT WITH PERSONS LIVING WITH DEMENTIA: PUTTING LESSONS LEARNED INTO PRACTICE

Lori Frank, *RAND Corporation, Arlington, Virginia, United States*

In the US few research initiatives actively engage persons living with dementia (PLWD) as partners in the research. The 2017 Summit actively engaged multiple types of stakeholder groups, including one for Persons Living with Dementia (PLWD), and was the first large-scale US research meeting to actively engage PLWD in planning and conduct of the meeting. The PLWD conducted a self-evaluation of their work that yielded best practices, meeting the need for guidelines for engaging with PLWD. The 2020 Summit presented the opportunity to test best practices. Some were implemented by the group conveners, like use of video-enabled meetings. Others were implemented with the PLWD, including decisions about governance structure for the group. The use of learnings from the first Summit in engaging with PLWD in the following Summit supported refinement of some engagement practices, yielding a list of recommendations for future work.

### ELICITING CARE MANAGEMENT PREFERENCES WITH ENGAGED CAREGIVERS AND INDIVIDUALS WITH MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT

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The goal of this study was to engage individuals with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) in developing a survey instrument that assists in the selection and prioritization of meaningful treatment outcomes in health care decision making. A multi-stakeholder advisory panel was engaged throughout the first qualitative phase of the study. 15 in-depth, guided interviews were conducted with caregiver-care recipient dyads who had been recently diagnosed with MCI. In addition to questions about meaningful outcomes, individuals were asked about quality of life and the severity of their symptoms using the Functional Attainment Staging Tool. 14 thematic concepts identified in an earlier, non-engagement-based caregiver study were all endorsed as relevant to the dyads interviewed. However, participants included 6 more thematic concepts, many of which were focused on social and community factors relevant to health care decision making. Engaging patients and caregivers allowed for focused dialogue within the interviews on shared treatment goals.