

Receiving Home Support Services Does Not Mean Client Dependence

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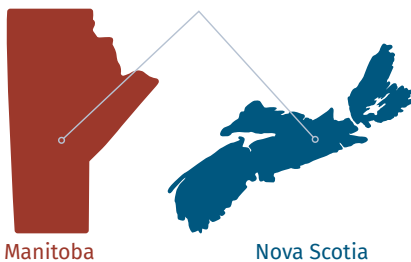


THE SYNOPSIS

Home care is generally designed to assist individuals with functional or cognitive impairments to allow them to live for as long as possible in their own homes. Although home care is often characterized as helping individuals to retain their independence, home care clients are often referred to as 'dependants' signifying reliance upon health and/or social care systems. However, a considerable gap remains in exploring the work done by the clients themselves. Research challenges the notion that home care clients are passive recipients of services. Important to note that all of the clients in this study had the cognitive capacity to manage, negotiate and communicate their scheduling needs and concerns, thus, they may not be typical of all home care clients.

HOW WE DID IT

Researchers interviewed
46
PARTICIPANTS
 in two Canadian Regions



12 configurations
 of **PARTICIPANTS**
 centre around older
 adults receiving



PUBLICLY-FUNDED

non-medical home support, and include the case/care coordinators (CCs), support workers, and where applicable, family carers and private agency supervisors.

STUDY SAMPLE

6
HOME CARE CLIENTS
 in Manitoba

6
HOME CARE CLIENTS
 in Nova Scotia

ranged in age from
60-97yrs+
 and had been receiving HOME CARE for 6 months-15 years who received mostly non-medical support.

THE HIGHLIGHTS

- Three types of work that clients engage in when managing a chronic illness at home are defined as: illness work, everyday life work, and biographical work.
- Home care clients take on a lot of their own work, with "work" defined here as involving "time, thought, and ingenuity".
- Home care clients regularly advocate both for themselves and their workers.
- Although home care clients are often unable, due to structural constraints within systems, to make decisions about various aspects of the services they receive, clients at times "take charge" of their home care services by setting physical and personal boundaries.
- Older adults actively work to maintain relationships with family and friends and home care providers, work that requires both emotional labour and relational skills that are defined in the study.

THE IMPACT

There is power in reframing the daily interactions of home care clients as “work”. These interactions require emotional labour, communications strategies, and relational skills among others.

Those who have previous employment experience are found to be influenced by this experience in terms of how they engage with their home care services, and how they present themselves (i.e. former health care workers better understand/manage their health conditions and previous teachers excel at managing daily routines).

The current “neoliberal climate” embraces independence and self-sufficiency. Clients in the study understand this and see home care as a way for them to maintain independence that they otherwise would not have.

This desire for independence can have positive and negative results – where efforts to refuse additional services offered may come at the expense of the client’s long-term health and well-being.

“And I just wish that I was well enough to just say, go home! (laughs) I don’t want you here. But, I’m very grateful that I have this extra care because I’ve realized that I just can’t do it on my own.”

“By telling her (case coordinator) some of the things I have (experienced), and I’ve got them written down here, the CC (case coordinator) was able to improve things at her end too.”

THE TAKEAWAY

This study challenges the stigma of dependency in old age, the assumptions that once home care clients are in the system, they will continue to push for more, even ‘taking’ more than they need.

Home care clients are not passive recipients of care. Everyone, no matter age or ability, dependent on others to a certain extent. This study showcases how home care clients engage in meaningful “work” while receiving publicly funded home care supports.

Clients in this study engage in different types of work depending on their functional abilities, personal biographies, and location on their illness trajectory.

Clients do not want to be perceived as a ‘burden’. They are not simply passive recipients of care, but do everything within their power to age at home, maintain their independence, and ensure that their workers feel respected.



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ABOUT

The Home Care Pathways Project Overview

Understanding clients’ journeys through provincial home care systems is critical to providing good quality care. “How approaches to care shape the pathways of older adult home care clients” (or “Home Care Pathways”) is an interdisciplinary research project being conducted in Nova Scotia and Manitoba. The project draws on different methods and focuses on specific timeframes, in this article’s case the approach we considered was around care constellations. The Project’s goal is to understand how approaches to care shape client pathways of older adult home care clients with chronic and long-term conditions through the home care systems in the two provinces.

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