

Exploring the Benefits of Person-Centered Home Care and the Policies that Limit its Practice

Authors: Lauren Spring, Laura M. Funk, Kaitlyn Kuryk, Grace Warner, Marilyn Macdonald, Rosanne Burke and Janice Keefe



THE SYNOPSIS

As part of a broader study to understand how approaches to care shape the pathways of older adult home care clients with chronic and long-term conditions in Nova Scotia and Manitoba, this paper examines the specific approach of person-centered care (PCC) from the unique perspective of a home care worker (HCW) and client. These perspectives were analyzed using critical disability and intersectionality frameworks to highlight ways in which person-centered care allows for greater social benefits and more efficient ways of working, but also how current home care policies do not allow for opportunities to be flexible or for the development of interpersonal relationships.

HOW WE DID IT

Researchers interviewed
46 PARTICIPANTS
in two Canadian Regions

One region in Manitoba –
Winnipeg Regional
Health Authority



All of Nova Scotia –
Nova Scotia
Health Authority

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

– AND –

17 Home Care
WORKERS
in Manitoba and Nova Scotia
Interviews with care workers
and clients at three points in time:
2019, 2021, 2022

THE HIGHLIGHTS

COMMON SENSE

- Home care workers often had to trust their own common sense above agency policies and relied on their own judgment and careful rule bending to meet principles of person-centered care.

FICTIVE “KINNING”

- The nature of home care work includes entering a client’s personal space and performing tasks that are often viewed as more intimate, and activities that would traditionally be associated with a family member.
- Fictive familiar relationships can benefit both the worker and the client, however they can also go against agency policies designed to prevent relationships between both parties from getting “too close”.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

- The practice of person-centered home care is often left to the worker to navigate when tasks and policies don’t align with premise of this care.
- Workers face difficulties in being flexible and developing relationships because of policies.
- Respect for workers could be an issue given reference by clients to workers as “girls” – suggesting interactions are based more on servitude than mutual respect.
- Perpetuation of the “invisibility” of care work due to not recognizing the skills needed to manage complex interactions – responding to unreasonable, unsafe or unjust demands.

“...well it’s not on my task sheet... but I figure you have to use your common sense. This job is a lot of common sense too.”

“I mean, they give us task sheets of what we can do. But a lot of those (extra) things only take 5 seconds to do, and sometimes you just do it. I mean, to follow all the rules would be almost next to impossible.”

THE TAKEAWAY

There is a need to better **contribute to the training of home care workers**, taking into account both cognitive knowledge (history and definitions) of PCC, but also affective understanding how PCC in practice aligns with one’s values/ beliefs/personal boundaries.

Existing **policies can sometimes negatively affect what HCWs regard as “common sense”** approaches to clients physical and emotional needs.

Though home care work is often precarious, poorly paid, and demanding both physically and emotionally, **many workers remain because they find the work—and the connections they forge with clients—rewarding and meaningful.**

While home care/support workers and personal support worker post-secondary training programs **stress the importance of PCC as a key component of curriculum**, workers are often unprepared for ways in which their own lives may become intertwined with those of their clients.



[View the full article >](#)

Spring, L., Funk, L., Kuryk, K., Warner, G., Macdonald, G., Burke, R., & Keefe, J. (2023). *Person-Centered Home Care: Exploring Worker-Client Relationships Using an Intersectional and Critical Disability Framework* *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 43(1), 101-109. doi.org/10.1177/07334648231201837



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.

nasca@msvu.ca
homecarepathways.ca

