

Submitted to:

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of  
Persons with Disabilities

Advancing Inclusion and Quality of Life for Canadian Seniors

Submitted by:

Active Aging Canada

November 9, 2017



[Active Aging Canada](#) is a national charity consisting of organizations at the national, provincial and local levels, and individuals, who all have the shared goal of promoting **active healthy aging**; a way of life in which physical, social, mental, emotional and spiritual activities are valued and are integrated into the daily lives of Canadians. When each of these components is maximized, the result is successful aging<sup>1</sup>. As only 10% of Canadian older adults would categorize themselves as ‘successful agers’<sup>2</sup>, we commend the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for conducting the “Advancing Inclusion and Quality of Life for Canadian Seniors” study; which identified themes critical to maintaining and increasing the quality of life of our rapidly aging population. As the committee considers submissions of evidence on topics related to successful aging, we would like to submit the crucial role of **knowledge translation** in disseminating and implementing best evidence and practices to professionals who work with older adults and to older adults themselves.

The need to support the independence, health, and thus quality of life of Canadian older adults by disseminating evidence-based information has been identified<sup>3,4</sup>. There are many barriers that exist in the effective transfer of healthy aging information knowledge and application to the intended target population; however at the core of this issue is that there **currently does not exist a formal network** to provide an outlet for aging researchers to disseminate their work and reciprocally, for health promoters or community organizations to access and apply evidence-based research findings or for older adults themselves to obtain accessible resources. Currently, this knowledge dissemination and use process is dependent on informal [and often time-consuming] efforts. Active Aging Canada has a long history of work that has sought to increase the ‘**healthy aging literacy**’ of older Canadians through education and the production of accessible resources on various topics on maintaining function, independence and health and social connectedness. One example is our *Personal Passport to Healthy Living* with over 10,000 copies distributed to practitioners and older adults across Canada. The *Passport* takes an older adult on a healthy lifestyle journey designed to provide them with benefits that will last a

lifetime. Our *Active Living Tips*, is a series of seven clear language “tip sheets” available in seven languages in both hard copy and on the website and have been distributed to over 33,000 older adults in Canada. Our two websites, [Active Aging Canada](#) and [Silver Times](#), average over 550,000 hits per year. Older adults and practitioners want reliable information on optimal aging which will maintain their independence.

In a recent continuing effort to bridge the knowledge translation gap on healthy aging information, Active Aging Canada successfully hosted a planning meeting in 2016 (with funding from CIHR’s Institute of Health Services and Policy Research Planning and Dissemination Grant program). The meeting brought together an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders and researchers who reached a consensus and developed an [Active Aging Knowledge Translation Framework](#); the first of its kind (*found on pg 11/12 of the Annual Report - link provided*).

Leading the way in the area of knowledge translation and active aging, the framework brings together trans-disciplinary knowledge creators (research community) with intermediaries (practitioners, community and professional organizations, stakeholders, and policy-makers) who work with the older adult population. Active Aging Canada, in its role as the knowledge broker, also recently secured funding to develop a Community of Practice in the area of active aging where the community of practice will be the vehicle by which Active Aging Canada implements it’s Knowledge Translation Framework.

As a result of our organizations interactions with older adults, older adult organizations, and researchers in the area of aging through these initiatives, we have identified recurring themes and issues which broadly involve various aspects of knowledge translation that we would like to share.

- Aging researchers are under heavy time-constraints and heavy workloads in securing funding for their research and in producing a successful program of research. They have identified the need for assistance and additional funding in order to be able to effectively engage in knowledge translation and in connecting with end-users.

- Practitioners and community organizations who work with older adults often have heavy workloads and thus easily accessible evidence-based resources are an asset. Additionally, the availability of low-cost or no-cost resources that they can disseminate to their patients/clients are in demand.
- Older adults and their adult children are constantly seeking out reliable information on chronic disease prevention and management; aging at home; programs that keep them socially connected and active.
- The critical success of knowledge translation is dependent on evaluation of these efforts and there currently does not exist a formal method of feedback by both knowledge users and producers (integrated knowledge translation) to inform the evolution of this field.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Support the unique role of knowledge brokers in the area of healthy aging.
- Support initiatives that seek to facilitate the movement of aging research into practice (help aging researchers disseminate their work and help practitioners to improve their practice).

#### **About Active Aging Canada**

Active Aging Canada (formerly known as the Active Living Coalition for Older Adults) was incorporated in 1999 and is registered as a national charity. We are in the business of health promotion through active aging to allow older Canadians to live as independently as they choose with meaning and purpose.

The organizations support lifelong healthy active aging of adult Canadians through participation, education, research, and promotion. As a voice for active living among older adults, Active Aging Canada works to:

- Foster **communication**, collaboration and coordination for active aging amongst its members and other related organizations and individuals
- Facilitate **knowledge translation** of research to practice related to older adults and active aging

- **Promote** older adults and active aging as a priority on the political, health and social agendas within Canadian society by conveying consistent, persuasive key messages developed by its members to prominent and influential individuals and organizations

We applaud work of this Standing Committee, and we are pleased to provide any additional information should it be required.

Respectfully submitted by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patty Clark".

Patricia Clark  
National Executive Director

1. Rowe JW, Kahn RL. Human aging: usual and successful. *Science*. 1987;237(4811):143–149.
2. Baker J, Meisner BA, Logan AJ, Kungl AM, Weir P. Physical activity and successful aging in Canadian older adults. *J Aging Phys Act*. 2009 Apr;17(2):223-35.
3. Discussion Brief prepared for the Federal Provincial and Territorial Committee of Officials (Seniors). *Healthy Aging in Canada: A New Vision, a Vital Investment*. 2007. Accessed November 2017. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/healthy-sante/vision/vision-bref/index-eng.php>.
4. CIHR Institute of Aging Strategic Plan 2013-2018: Living Longer, Living Better. Accessed November 2017. <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/47179.html>.