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ABSTRACT

The onset of dementia for older adults marks the start of negotiating access to a wide range of supportive services to deal with the many changes dementia can incur. Awareness of and timely access to supportive services is necessary to enable improvements in health, quality of life and care costs. In keeping with the new national dementia strategy and in partnership with seniors living with early dementia, their caregivers/significant others and key stakeholders the main objectives of this research project are: 1. To identify formal supportive services for seniors with early dementia and their caregivers/partners/significant others. 2. To identify barriers and facilitators related to access and uptake of formal supportive services that are necessary to improve and sustain health and QOL. 3. To identify best strategies to support the development, implementation, and sustainability of an action plan to enhance access and uptake of supportive services to improve health and QOL. 4. To develop a toolkit of resources to facilitate awareness of and access to appropriate community supportive services for seniors living with early dementia and their caregivers. No such educational package currently exists in the province. An Executive Report will be presented to the Minister for Children, Seniors and Social Development, Government of NL, to inform the creation of best practices for dementia care.

We are currently conducting a pilot project focusing on 4 communities in Eastern NL (St. John's, Carbonear, Clarenville and Marystown). Individual interviews with seniors who 1) self-identify as experiencing symptoms of early dementia, with or without having received a cognitive-related diagnosis and 2) live at home, will take place in 4 selected communities. A focus group with 5 informal caregivers/significant others of individuals with early dementia and a focus group of 5 community informants (community health nurses, and leaders of local seniors groups) will also be conducted in each of the selected communities to identify and discuss formal support services in the community, as well as ways to enhance the development and uptake of these services. This project will potentially be the gateway to obtaining larger funding to conduct the study in all areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are envisioning that the study will be of interest to future doctoral students who are considering our PhD in Nursing program as a piece of their doctoral research.