

PROJECT SUMMARY

From May 2014 to February 2015, the Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network (SCN) embarked on a collaboration with the Patient and Community Engagement Research Program. The goal was to engage older Albertans in a conversation on the issues they see as most affecting their health. The areas raised by participants as being most important were then examined against the platform areas of the Seniors Health SCN to assess whether the priorities of the SCN aligned with the perspectives of older Albertans.

Thirty-four older adults living in Calgary or a small rural Alberta community agreed to participate. Participants were between 61 to 101 years of age. The majority were female (n = 30, 88%) and retired from work (n = 31, 91%). Participant numbers equally represented the rural (n = 17) and urban (n = 17) communities.

WHAT WE HEARD

Accessing the healthcare system can be challenging, particularly around finding a family physician and moving through the system.

Older adults are making efforts to manage their own health.

Older adults have suggestions for improving the system:

- Communication integrated throughout the system
- More information on the different types of care facilities and levels of care available at each
- Better access to the care they need
- Health professionals with knowledge on how to care for older adults
- Innovative housing options

Two Seniors Health Strategic Clinical Network priority areas were not directly raised by participants:

- > dementia, and
- > end-of-life care.

This work served as a barometer on participant perspectives as compared against the current directions of the Seniors Health SCN. Although there was strong alignment between the priority areas of the Seniors Health SCN and the views of participants, this work demonstrated that seniors have a unique voice that should be sought and listened to.