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Southern Alberta's Premier Seniors Publication

For generations 50+

November 2026

Vol 42 | #11

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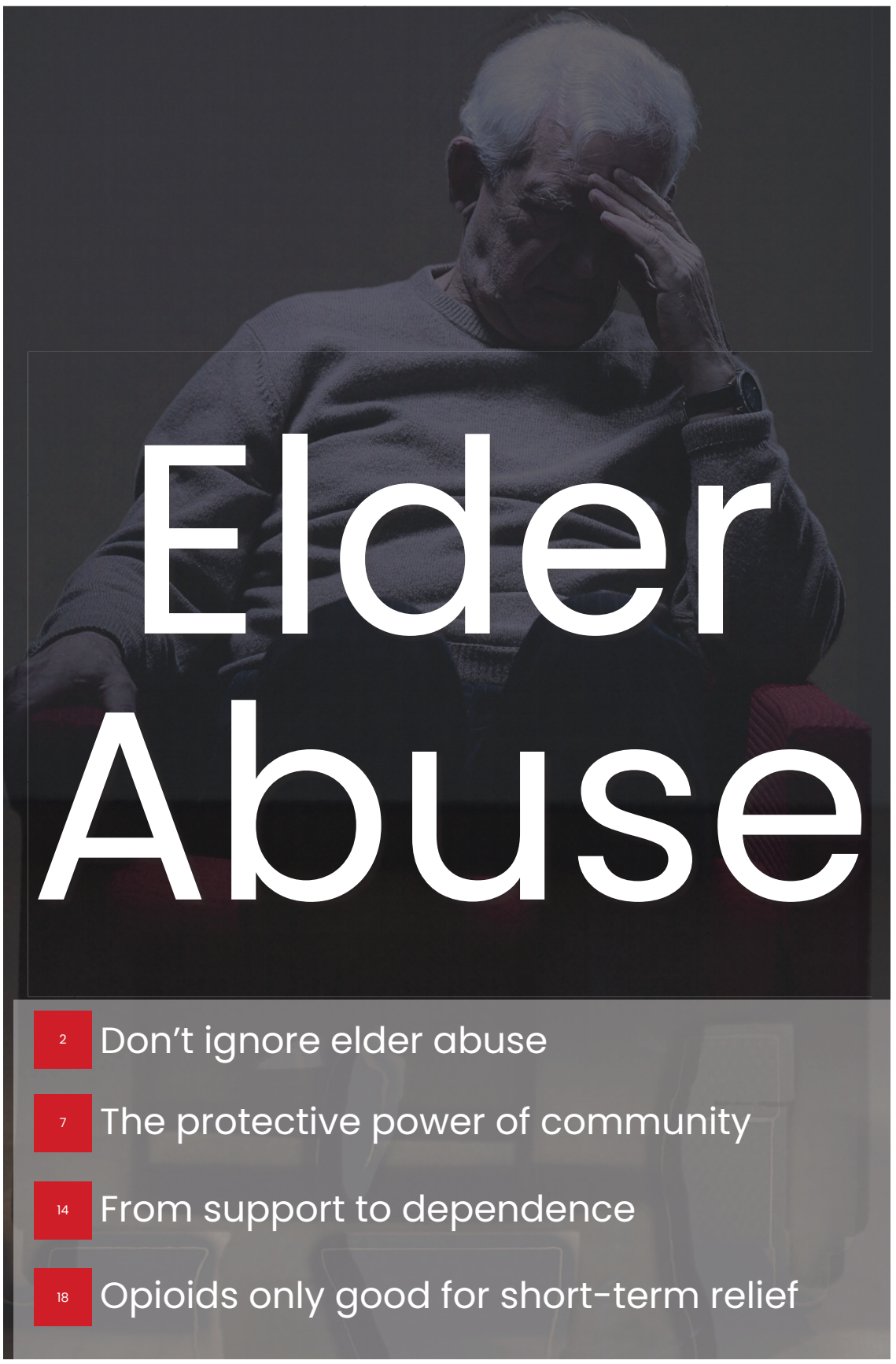


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Elder Abuse

2 Don't ignore elder abuse

7 The protective power of community

14 From support to dependence

18 Opioids only good for short-term relief

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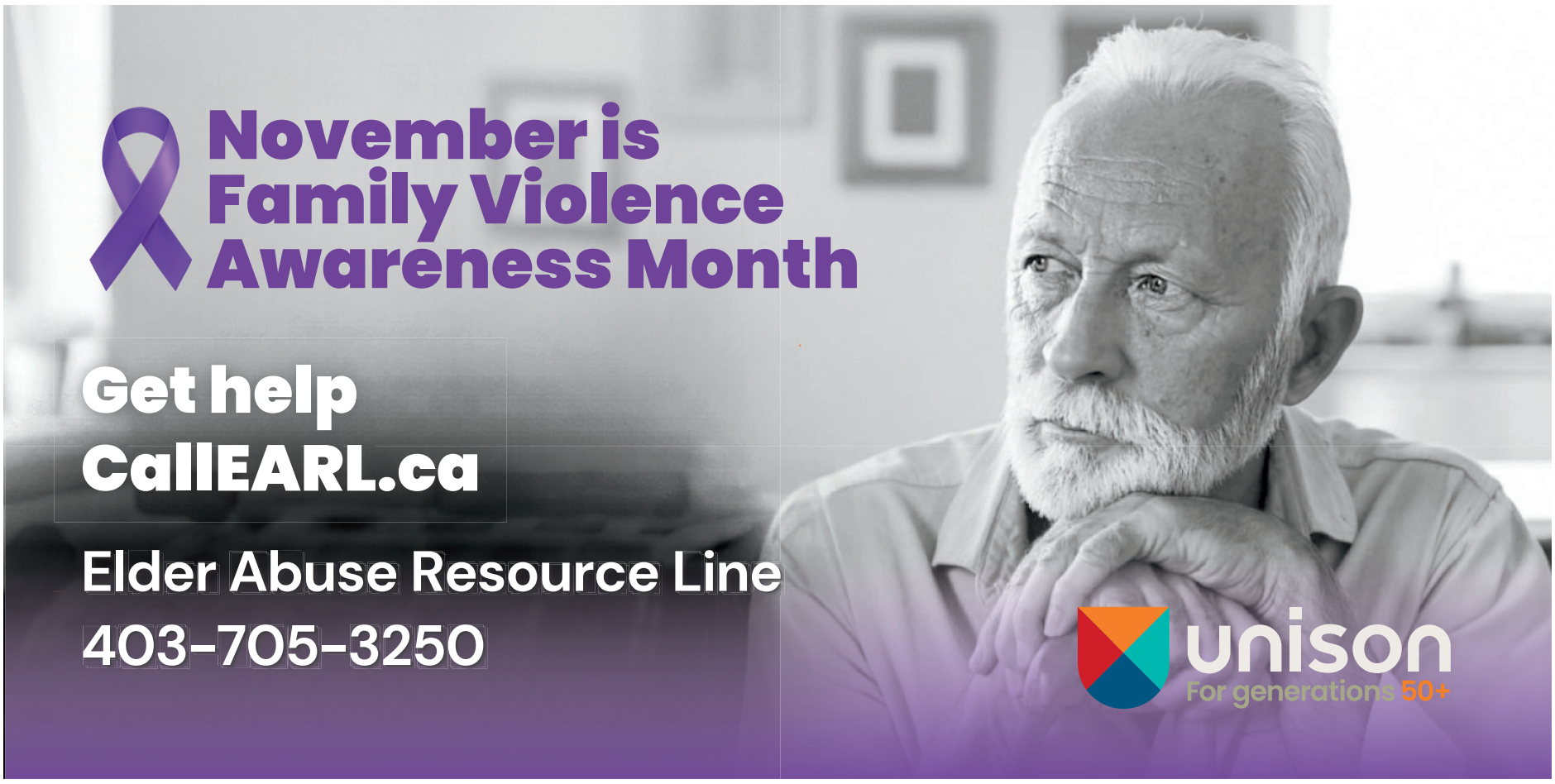


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Don't ignore elder abuse

Mel Lefebvre, Marketing & Communications Manager

How do you get the public engaged on a topic like elder abuse? It's a problem of epidemic proportions, hidden in plain sight. At Unison, we don't go for the "sad senior" trope. Aging is a time of vibrancy, fun, connection, and rediscovery. You should feel good about yourself at every age.

We have aging stereotypes to bust, and part of it is acknowleging not everyone gets to reach their golden years. The challenge from our end is depicting the seriousness of elder abuse, motivating the public to take it seriously, help where they can, all while using imagery that is, well, 'sad.'

The truth about elder abuse is upsetting and ugly, so let's just have it out in the open.

One in 10 seniors experience abuse in Alberta, and the real number is higher, because the province can only report on what's reported to it. Abuse is most often perpetrated by someone known to the victim, and for elder abuse, that's most commonly their adult children.

So what? What can any of us do about it? It's sad, but without it directly affecting you, what power do you have? I'm so glad you asked.

Unison's Elder Abuse shelter is one of two shelters in the province built specifically for seniors. We give seniors who are actively fleeing abuse safety, support and the ability heal.

This holiday season, the Shelter is at the heart of our Help for the Holidays campaign, and Giving Tuesday on December 1 is when we're asking our community to show up for it.

Your gift helps with what comes next. When they're ready to leave the shelter, a senior re-entering the world may not have access to their bank accounts, or may want a completely fresh start so their abuser can't find them.

Here is what a donation can do: **$100** lets a senior put together a starter kit of essentials: soap, toothpaste, shaving supplies, bedding, etc. **$500** helps a senior set up what they need for their health, like transit fare to the doctor's office, visits to the pharmacy, and picking up where they left off for their wellbeing. **$1,000** helps a senior get a head start on their housing needs, removing one of the biggest barriers to restarting their lives.

Unison also provides outreach services to seniors unable to access the shelter, and for one year after leaving the shelter. This helps with community connection while staying safe and free from abuse.

If you have it in your heart and budget to donate, please visit **unisonalberta.com/donate.**

Give on Giving Tuesday, December 1, or anytime through the Holiday Giving campaign, and help a senior start over.

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November 2026

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President's Message



Larry Mathieson, CEO and President

At Unison for generations 50+, we are proud to operate North America's first purpose-built shelter dedicated to supporting seniors fleeing elder abuse. It is a distinction that has brought international attention to Calgary and has helped position our organization as a leader in this important area of work.

When we connect with colleagues working in elder abuse prevention and support, we frequently meet professionals who have visited our shelter. Some came to the grand opening; others have learned from us as they planned to establish similar facilities New York, San Diego, and elsewhere.

We are encouraged by this interest. However, it also reminds us how much work there is to do to ensure older adults have access to the safety, services and housing they need.

Over the past several years, the Alberta government and the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council have expanded outreach, and case management supports for seniors experiencing abuse. These services are essential, but Alberta's growing older population presents an increasing challenge.

In 2022, the Alberta government reported that approximately 700,000 seniors lived in the province and that about 4,000 adults turn 65 each month. Statistics Canada reported that people aged 65 and older represented 15.5 per cent of Alberta's population in July 2025. By July 2026, that proportion had risen to 16 per cent.

These figures highlight the importance of planning for the needs of an aging population, including those who may be vulnerable to abuse, and the support infrastructure for elder abuse care is still developing. Alberta does not yet have a comparable network of transitional elder abuse shelters. A senior fleeing abuse, finding immediate safety is only the first step. Securing suitable longer-term accommodation and rebuilding a sense of security can be equally challenging.

The need is significant. The Alberta government has reported that at least one in 10 seniors will experience elder abuse. Professionals working in this field often believe the true number is higher because abuse is frequently underreported. Shame, fear, financial dependence and concern about family relationships can all prevent older adults from seeking help.

As Alberta's senior population grows, so too does the importance of developing the services and infrastructure needed to protect those at risk. This means strengthening outreach, expanding case management, improving access to safe housing and ensuring older adults know where to turn for help.

At Unison, our work is supported by the Alberta government, but government funding alone does not meet every need. We also rely on the generosity of donors who understand the importance of protecting vulnerable older adults.

As we enter the holiday season, please remember seniors in our community who may be experiencing abuse, isolation or uncertainty about their future. Your support helps sustain the shelter, outreach and case management work that can make a profound difference in someone's life.

Together, we can help ensure that every older adult has the opportunity to live with dignity, safety and respect.







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For generations 50+

In 2026, Unison Society plans to raise approximately $2 million through fundraising activities, with projected costs of $400,000.

Funds raised will support programs improving the lives of seniors in need in our community.

For more information, contact
fundraising@unisonalberta.com

The Postmaster of Maleb

Ivy Trumpour, U.E.

In 1911, a post office opened on a homestead near Bow Island, and Amy Bowen became its Postmaster. She and her husband named it Maleb, using their initials for Morley, Amy, Lorne, Elizabeth, Bowen.

Mrs. M.L. Bowen (1891-1970) was there when the Calgary United Empire Loyalist group was formed on February 18, 1928, and was elected its Second Vice President. Sometime between 1962 and 1966, she served as its President. Whether she had Loyalist ancestors of her own is a question that still needs answering.

Before she was Mrs. Bowen, she was Amy Elizabeth Puffer, born on May 4, 1891, on Col. Walker's property, located in what is now east Calgary.

Col. Walker was an Inspector and Commanding Officer in the North-west Mounted Police (NWMP). When he was appointed to accompany Lt. Gov. Dewdney to pay treaty money to the Indigenous people, he was put in charge of the money trunk, which held $100,000 in one dollar bills. After leaving the NWMP, he managed Senator Cochrane's ranch in Southern Alberta.

In 1883 he acquired 125 acres in Calgary and built his first and second houses, both lost to flooding of the Bow River. He built the red brick house that stands on the property in 1910. In 1915, at the age of 70, he took a Forestry Corp overseas to France and Scotland to cut wood for the trenches of the Great War. He returned to Calgary in 1919.

His son, William James Selby, had 59 acres of the property on the west side of the Bow River designated as a Federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary, which became the Inglewood Bird Sanctuary. The City of Calgary bought the property in 1970 and manages it as a natural reserve.

Amy was one of seven children born to Charlotte Ann (Gilmore) and William Franklin Puffer. She was a year old when her father left Calgary to take up a homestead near Olds. The family moved to Lacombe in 1893, and a few years later established a butcher shop in the town. When the butchery and Hop Chung's laundry next door burned down, the two businesses built a single shared property. William had paid the head tax for his friend Hop Chung to bring his wife and family from China. William spoke fluent Cree and hired First Nations people. After William Puffer was elected as Lacombe's MLA in 1905, Amy attended the opening of Alberta's first legislature along with her family.



Photo: Ivy Trumpour, U.E.

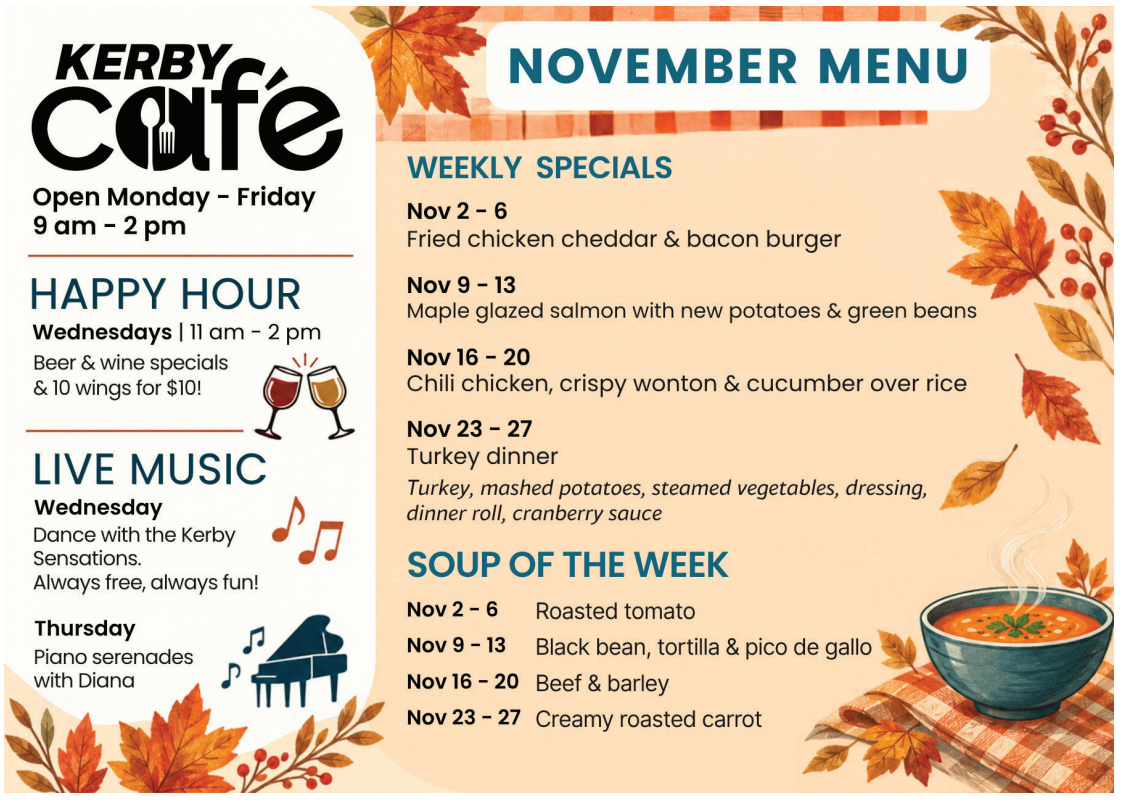
So where do the Loyalists come in? Wikipedia informs us that William Puffer was the son of a United Empire Loyalist. The Puffer Genealogy, published at www.forgottenbooks.com and kindly lent to us by a Puffer descendant, outlines William's ancestry. His great grandfather, the Reverend Isaac Puffer (1761-1838), was a soldier in American regiments during the American Revolution, not a Loyalist.

William's mother, however, was Louisa Cordelia Root, daughter of William Spencer Root (1808-1889) and Camilla Louisa Holmes (1815-1885). According to census records, William Root was a farmer born in Ontario, and Camilla was a weaver, born in either the US or Canada. They lived in Leeds County, Ontario. Petitions for land in Leeds were made by both the Root and Holmes families in 1792. It is possible that the petitions were for compensation as Loyalist supporters during the Revolution. Further research is needed to determine if Amy did indeed have both Loyalist and patriot ancestors.

Amy met Morley Lorne Bowen in Lacombe, and they were married in 1909. Their honeymoon was a trip to the mountains, returning via Calgary, where they spent a happy day riding the new street car on Stephen Avenue.

The following year they moved south to Conquerville, near Bow Island. When the post office opened in 1911, Amy became the Postmaster. Morley hauled the mail from Bow Island, which was on the Turkey Track railroad. The Bowens kept the Post Office in a crossroads store on their homestead. Amy resigned as Postmaster in June of 1917, when the family moved to Calgary. There, Morley was an inspector of agencies for a fire and indemnity insurance company. Morley died in 1964, Amy in 1970, and they rest in Mountain View Memorial Gardens.

Anyone interested in the Calgary Branch of the UELAC can contact Bill Simpson, U.E: william.simpson@live.ca or visit uelac.org/calgary



Bruno muses on ageing

Ada Muser

The bar is quiet. A man practices his billiard shots; the cue ball clacks against another, then rolls across the baize with an almost inaudible shush. Clack and shush, clack and shush. The bartender polishes wine glasses to look busy, and a lonely man sits by the window, nursing a beer, gawking. Boredom spreads to the four corners of the room

Two grizzled gentlemen sitting in the corner are writers arguing over what's better: basing stories on real life or inventing them. Using the author's experiences as an emotional seed keeps his feet firmly on the ground. Based on real-life events, Bruno and Elsa's stories are credible and are used as allegories.

The second approach is pure fantasy: the author makes the rules, physics, and logic of a world that never existed, often leading to bizarre ends.

* * * * *

This month is the 57th Bruno and Elsa article, about aging. The topic emerged when they, now octogenarians, made a sweeping trip through Central Europe visiting relatives and acquaintances. Lately, such reunions are quite shocking. Even when a decade younger than Bruno and Elsa, many are a sorry lot.

The long periods between visits make the signs of aging more noticeable. Bruno wonders what the sequence of aging is and why it is not uniform for everybody.

It is nobody's fault except for the few cases of really deplorable lifestyles, but rather the different living conditions, poor medical care or lack thereof altogether, too much stress or bad genes.

* * * * *

In Bruno's childhood, the years followed the same routine. Ten months in a big city and two months in the country with his cousins of similar age. They had a great time! He was supposed to have gone through puberty already for five years after the age of nine, but somehow he missed it. The cousins were still climbing trees and playing hide-and-seek, hunting for mushrooms or just exploring the woods that surrounded the mountain village. It changed when Bruno was fifteen. Suddenly the girls were no longer just genderless playmates, but objects of admiration and yearning.

He met a precious young lady, in these stories called Elsa, at sixteen. They dated intermittently for six years. One day, when the relationship was on again, Bruno inadvertently proposed to Elsa during an intermission of a variety show. The proposal was not romantic as in the novels, neither down on his knee nor with a bouquet in hand. Instead, while squinting his eyes to keep the cigarette smoke out, he pondered: "I think we will end up in church this time."

"I think so too," she replied, also smoking. Bruno took it for acquiescence and blurted out, "Then when?" The "when" turned out to be the 16th of May the following year, when he was twenty-three and Elsa still twenty-two for the next two months. Their daughter was born 360 days later. Another milestone reached.

Next they settled into a rhythm of working, providing for the family, and climbing the corporate ladders with retirement far ahead. It was not boring; on the contrary. They bought a house and furnished it to be comfortable and pleasant. It was mostly Elsa's doing. Changing a house into a home is a woman's job. They acquired a circle of friends from the same backgrounds, travelled to foreign countries and developed hobbies, a classical middle-class lifestyle focusing on material comfort, financial stability, property ownership, and social respectability. It was the longest period of the aging process that snuck up on them imperceptibly. It lasted until they became empty nesters.

The next decade or two, they still worked and gradually became comfortably well-off, while healthy and very fit. They did not complicate their lives with personal and financial crises or by hoarding stuff.

* * * * *

At this point, telling the rest of the story becomes tricky. Retirement is the critical stage of the aging process. The narrative cannot be based only on the author's life experiences, because the future is yet to come. It relies solely on his imagination. It can take many turns; there will be shocks, times of mourning, but also of hope, even euphoria. Frankly, it can be a mess.

On top of biological factors, longevity can be increased by active living. In the beginning, it may be physical activities, but they decrease with every subsequent decade. Consider that in international competitions, the oldest Olympic Games winner was Pat McDonald, 42. The forties are likely the limit of extremely intensive active living.

It becomes gradually nonphysical. Being naturally cerebral or artistic helps, but it is not impossible to switch to things intellectual or learn crafts. People often have the ability, but have not had time to read, visit shows and museums, learn languages or develop hobbies until now. There are many examples of how using one's mind leads not only to excellence in whatever field one chooses, but also to longevity.

Enter Liběna, "an icon of Czech fashion." She is 15 years past the retirement age. During her career, she has achieved everything possible in the fashion world at home and abroad, is full of energy and pursues her passion with a fervour her younger colleagues must envy.

She lives in Brno, the second-largest city in the country, with her husband Jan, who is now a busy amateur actor and a musician. By the nature of their careers, they spend half of their time together and the other half in different cities, with Liběna commuting.

Bruno and Elsa met with them recently and wondered how they make it work. Liběna says that "Jan and I have a somewhat unique relationship… unfortunately, my work, my studio, and clients are all in Prague, 200 kilometres away. I spent forty years building my career there. I do not intend to give it up just yet… I am constantly coming up with new concepts, am getting wonderful projects, and work on limited-edition collections… and I need to create just as much as I need to breathe."

Jan and Liběna share the same values, are from the same social class, respect each other and love each other. That is why Bruno does not think he will be hearing about Liběna's retirement anytime soon.

Meeting Liběna and Jan was the best part of Bruno and Elsa's trip this year. There's always some new and interesting topic to discuss. This time, it was



Liběna's exhibition. Photo: Ada Muser

an exhibition of her life's oeuvre. Bruno is not surprised she is still active in her seventies. That's often the lot of top-tier artists. She is in good company. Bruno and Elsa saw Nello Santi in Zurich conducting in 2012. He was 81 years old and frail. He literally shuffled his way to the rostrum with the help of two violinists, and conducted a three-hour-long opera, and two days later another one. Each from memory with the energy of a man four times younger. During the intermissions, they helped him down and sat him in a chair to rest, and then back up again. His interaction with star singers on the stage was extraordinary, a result of years working together and mutual respect.

Daniel Barenboim plays Beethoven's and Mozart's piano concertos, conducts symphonies, also from memory, in his eighties. The same is true for painters. Canadian Lawren Harris, Emily Carr, and Europeans Picasso and Michelangelo were also active well into old age. Playing music, painting, sculpting and obviously even fashion designing are healthy professions, unless excessive energy or feverish creativity cuts an artist down at an early age, as happened to Vincent van Gogh, Bellini and Mozart. Even stubbornness helps. When Christopher Columbus was confronted by angry sailors on the way to the "West Indies," he famously said: "I had set out to find the Indies and would continue until I found them with the help of God."

Bruno is not a top-tier artist or famous explorer, but he keeps his brain active by writing short stories and is determined to bring every task to fruition.

* * * * *

That Bruno and Elsa are both eighty-five while their friends and/or relatives are mostly widowed looks like they are doing something right. They are not blood relatives, so it can't be a set of great genes alone. Perhaps it is the desire to continue living actively, an incentive to go on and look into the future with optimism.

Early in February, three crowns and two bridges in the middle of Bruno's upper jaw collapsed. He suddenly acquired a grin like retired hockey player Bobby Clarke.

Dental work lasts only so many years before it must be replaced. The choice was either wearing "choppers" or, in the dental jargon, "install three implants and an Implant Bridge, plus a 23 Crown". It was going to be a lot of money. It seemed rather a risky investment for someone eighty-five years old. However, the prospect of keeping teeth overnight in a glass of water with Polident was a repulsive vision to Bruno, and even more to Elsa, so he opted for the implants.

If $24,973.15 is not a great incentive to live at least another five years to amortize this investment, Bruno doesn't know what is!

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At Kerby Centre

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- ✓ December 8 & 22
- ✓ January 12 & 26

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The protective power of community

Carolyn Kury de Castillo, in collaboration with Silvera

In the bright, lively courtyard at Silvera's Westview in Calgary, 86-year-old Ruth Wiebe talks about vaccines with a pragmatic, cheerful outlook.

She is one of many residents who use the on-site vaccination clinics. Ruth keeps her immunizations up to date because she remembers a time before vaccines were readily available.

"I'm here where a community of our old people lives and if somebody gets COVID or the flu, it spreads like crazy if you're not protected," Ruth explains. "It's hugely important."

Ruth grew up in northern Manitoba. She recalls being seven years old and suffering from a severe case of measles that left her with a fever of 106 degrees for a week.

Her strongest memory, though, is of the 1950s. "Polio was around in 1950," she recalls, her voice steady. "I remember a lady walking with a brace on her leg for the rest of her life, and my dad visited a man in the hospital... he never got out of the iron lung. My dad visited him for years and years. That was 1950, and some people died."

Today, vaccine hesitancy is a complicated problem for public health professionals. Jaclyn Makowichuk, a pharmacist with Sandstone Pharmacies, sees it from the professional side. Sandstone brings vaccination clinics directly into Silvera's congregate living facilities, working to close the gap between vaccine availability and patient uptake.

"The big concern is, if they're not vaccinated, it can have serious implications that can lead to hospitalizations and other complications," says Makowichuk.

Flu vaccination rates in these facilities are relatively encouraging, at around 70 to 80 percent. COVID-19 uptake is harder, often stalling between 60 and 70 percent. According to Makowichuk, the main barrier is how people now feel about the virus.

"There is definitely some vaccine fatigue," she observes. "With COVID vaccinations, the immunity doesn't last very long. We come into facilities twice a year to provide vaccines... and the spring uptake is even less."

Makowichuk notes that public conversation about COVID-19 has changed a great deal since the early, frightening days of the pandemic. "Now, I think people think it's just a cold. Most people have been vaccinated at least once or twice, so they have some immunity, and they think, 'I barely get symptoms, so why do I need more?'

That attitude makes the pharmacists' job harder, because the goal is to lessen the severity of the illness as well as prevent it. Makowichuk also points to Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) as a growing concern. "It leads to complications in the lungs and can lead to pneumonia or hospitalization... It's a disease we've seen in pediatrics typically, but it has mutated, and now we're seeing it in the geriatric population."



Vaccines protect you, and your community. Photo: Elen Sher

Different vaccines have to be spaced out, and RSV in particular needs careful scheduling around flu and COVID-19, so the logistics are a real burden for pharmacies and residents alike. Still, the clinics clearly make a difference.

Makowichuk says education is the key to higher uptake. Handouts and presentations are standard, but she believes the personal touch matters most. "I think part of it comes down to interaction with the staff and them having a consistent message and encouragement; that's the most impactful."

For residents like Ruth, encouragement and easy access go a long way. "What do you think of having the vaccine clinic here?" she is asked. "I love it," she replies instantly. "Because I gave up my car, so having it here is super."

Ruth's story and Makowichuk's observations fit together. Ruth explains why: she has seen what happens when diseases go unchecked. Makowichuk explains how: the logistical and educational work it takes to keep a vulnerable community safe.

As we continue to live with endemic viruses, the lessons of the past and the expertise of modern pharmacy point the way forward. Ruth's message to her fellow residents and the broader public is simple: "I will always be immunized, always. But I wish people would reconsider when they don't want to, because it's worth it."

Protecting the health of a community in congregate care takes medical science. It also takes residents who remember what life was like without it, and people willing to bring the clinic to their door.





There is symbolism in plants

Deborah Maier, Calgary Horticultural Society

Pinning a poppy on my coat reminds me how fortunate I am that my family found a home in Canada after we were displaced from a World War II-ravaged Europe. It also has me reflecting on plants that have culturally important symbolism. Poppies remind me of another symbol of peace. When we "extend an olive branch," it's a call for a truce between two conflicted parties. A dove with an olive twig in its beak is instantly recognized as a plant with a purpose.

Flowers have historically had popular symbolism, in part thanks to the Victorian era, which developed the language of flowers. Flowers in paintings added a layer of meaning. How bouquets were presented and what they contained also held meaning. Of course, like all languages, the meaning is clear only if both the sender and receiver of the message are fluent. Some of these meanings linger today. Red roses, for example, can be a symbol of passion and love. Forget-me-nots are an expression of "missing you."

How many of us have pressed flowers from an event in a book? In the past, I've often done that, wanting to capture something from the moment that is more tangible than a photograph. Phone books were great to use for fuller flowers, but almost any book could be used for more delicate flowers like violets. To get the pressed flower dry took time. Often the pressing was forgotten until the book was picked up again, and encountering the pressed flower would bring a flood of memories.

Living in Calgary with its dry air, I will either hang a bouquet upside down to keep the stalks straight or let the flowers dry in a vase. The dried flowers then are used for making dried-flower arrangements. When I look at them, I reflect on where they came from and why I have them. Some are happy events such as my niece's wedding; others are from more somber occasions. Regardless, they connect me with other people.

Gardens are great for symbolically connecting people and plants. We create birthplace and memorial forests, letting families commemorate a loved one with the planting of a tree.

Reader Rock Garden (William Reader), Beaulieu Gardens at Lougheed House (Lady Isabella Clark Hardisty Lougheed), and Central Memorial Park (Richard Iwersen) are tributes to people who had a vision for Calgary in its early years. Plants and plantings in these gardens reflect the society they were created for. Reading the history of these places reveals the language of the plantings.

Visiting a garden and having the chance to chat with the gardener can unveil the stories behind plant choices. Rarely is a plant selected indifferently. Sometimes plants are selected after a research project but often, especially with time, plants are tied to people.

Many plants in my garden have direct connections to people. I grow roses because my mother loves roses. I grow tiger lilies because my father really liked them. I have upright clematis because my friend Kath gave them to me. It's been 30 years, but I still have Bergenia from a Calgary Horticultural Society instructor whose class I took when I was trying to figure out how to be a successful gardener in this climate. Some tell a story of the evolution of a garden. I have chatted with many gardeners whose gardens have similar narratives. Some plants are symbols of past events, some are reflections of the now, and some represent hope for the future. The legacy is expanded when you share your plants and their stories. Garden plant, houseplant, poppy pin...do you have a story to share?

For plant recommendations and opportunities to share gardening stories, visit calhort.org.



A bouquet of memories. Photo: Deborah Maier



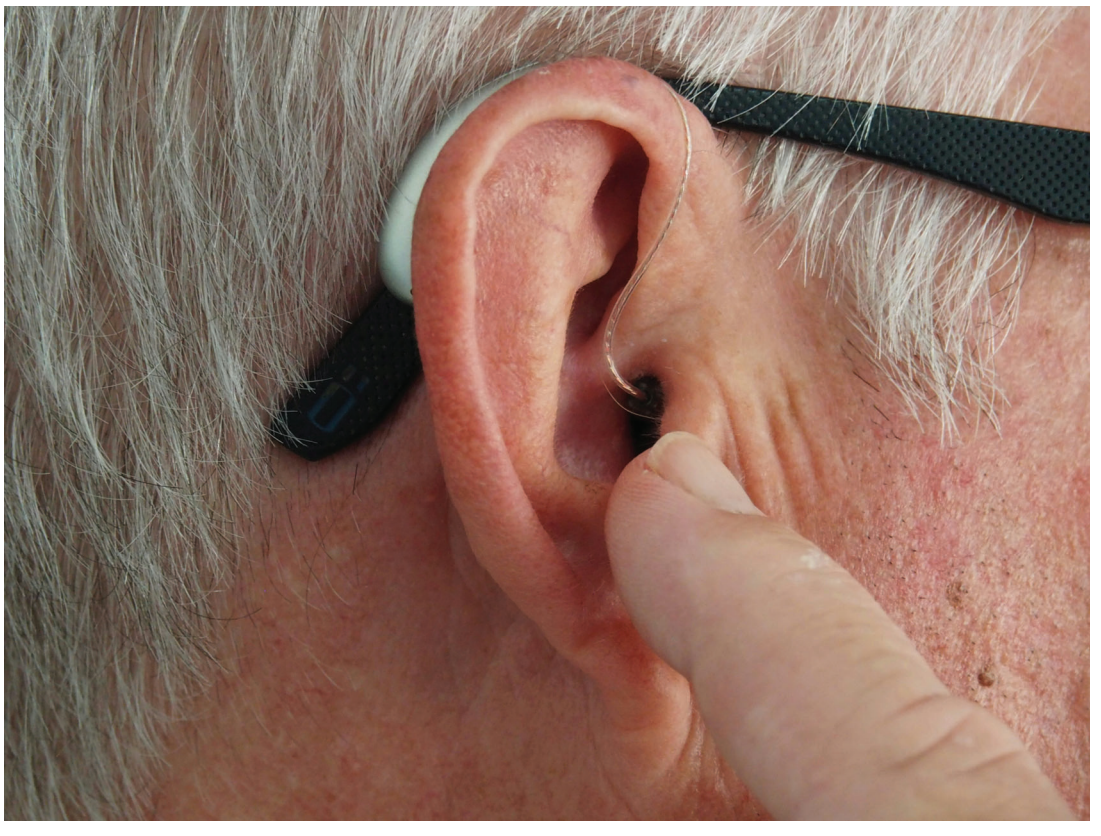
Hearing aids can do more than turn up the volume

Carolyn Kury de Castillo,

You buy hearing aids expecting one thing: to hear better. Today's hearing aids can do much more than simply amplify sound. They can connect to your smartphone, stream phone calls, music and videos directly into your ears, connect to your television and, with the right accessories, even help you follow a conversation across a noisy restaurant table. But knowing those features exist and knowing how to use them can be a very different matter.

Ninety-year-old Helen recently stopped by Unison at Kerby Centre for a free hearing test offered by Ears to You. She already wears hearing aids, but she says she has noticed that conversations are becoming more difficult, particularly when she is around a lot of people.

"I have a hard time hearing that," Helen says. "The others who have hearing aids, they don't seem to have as much trouble as me. Maybe they do, but they never mention it. They just try and stay close to the one who's doing the talking. I find it harder now that I'm around a lot of people."



A little tool that does more than turn it up. Photo: Mark Paton

That experience is common, says registered hearing aid practitioner Trish Ehman, owner of the Calgary Ears to You franchise. Sometimes the hearing aid is working fine and the challenge is the environment or the way the brain processes sound.

"Hearing aids have come a long way and they're great when it comes to most situations," Ehman explains. "But sometimes hearing aids have a limitation, depending on the person's hearing loss."

Accessories can help in those situations.

Hearing aids aren't always enough

Ehman says people sometimes assume that hearing loss is simply a matter of making sounds louder. But if the damage is to the nerves involved in hearing and processing sound, the brain can have difficulty separating speech from competing background noise.

"You can amplify, but it doesn't always help distinguish the voices or certain words that someone's trying to hear," she says.

That can make situations like restaurants, meetings or family gatherings particularly challenging. One solution is a remote microphone. A person you're talking to can wear the microphone, or a speaker at an event can wear it. The person's voice is then picked up by the microphone and streamed directly to the hearing aids.

There are also table microphones designed for group situations. Ehman says these can help pick up the voices of several people sitting around a table and send that sound directly to the hearing aids. The goal is to make the voice you want to hear stand out from everything else.

Your TV can talk directly to your ears

Another popular accessory connects your hearing aids to the television. A small device plugs into the TV and streams the sound directly to the hearing aids. That can be good for the person with hearing loss and for everyone else in the room. Ehman jokes that one of the common symptoms of hearing loss is everyone else saying, "Turn the TV down."

With direct TV streaming, the person wearing hearing aids can hear the television directly while the rest of the household can keep the volume at a comfortable level. There are also simpler accessories, such as remote controls, that allow users to adjust volume or change listening settings without having to reach for their phone.

Do you need a smartphone?

Not necessarily, though Ehman says a smartphone, tablet or iPad can open up many more possibilities. Many newer hearing aids have Bluetooth capability, allowing them to connect directly with compatible phones and tablets.

An app can give the wearer more control over their hearing aids. Depending on the device, users may be able to adjust the volume, change settings for different environments, adjust clarity or even control the direction of the microphones. Bluetooth can also stream audio directly from a phone or tablet, including music, YouTube videos, Netflix and phone calls. For someone who spends a lot of time on the phone, that can be particularly useful.

"You can have an easy FaceTime or Zoom call and you're hearing everything people are saying," Ehman says.

Some of her patients don't use smartphones at all. They may have a landline but use a tablet for other activities. There are also options for people who prefer a traditional telephone. Some landline phones have built-in amplification, while older technologies can also help strengthen the connection between a telephone and a hearing aid.

The technology can also create a barrier

The problem is that all of these choices can become overwhelming. Ehman says she regularly helps people figure out how their hearing aids can connect with their phones, televisions and other devices. "Technology is only as good as the person that knows how to use it," she says.

She believes providers have a responsibility to explain what's available rather than expecting patients to know which questions to ask.

"It shouldn't be up to our patients to know how to even ask for these things," she says. "It's really up to the providers for us to be able to keep up-to-date with everything that's available."

That is particularly important because someone could be paying for sophisticated hearing technology without ever using some of its features simply because they don't know how to access them.

At the same time, Ehman says not everyone wants all the bells and whistles. Some people want to put their hearing aids in and forget about them, which is perfectly reasonable.

"The hearing aid for day-to-day listening are doing what they're supposed to be doing without having any connection to a phone," she says.

The technology is there to offer more options.

Communicating better

That can involve technology, but it can also involve some very basic changes in the way people communicate with someone who has hearing loss. Face the person when you're speaking, slow down and give the brain a little more time to process what it's hearing. Don't assume that speaking louder is always the answer.

As hearing declines, people often rely more heavily on visual cues such as facial expressions and lip movements. That means it can be particularly difficult to understand someone who is walking away or facing in another direction.

Ehman says the ultimate goal goes beyond hearing sounds.

"It's about improving our communication and communicating better."

Hearing loss can also gradually change the way people participate in social situations. Ehman says some people begin avoiding situations because listening becomes exhausting.

"They're just having to put so much focus and effort into listening to what they're saying," she says.

Eventually, some people simply stop asking others to repeat themselves. That's why she emphasizes addressing hearing problems early.

"We want to get people hearing prior to those things happening," she says. "It's making it more enjoyable again."

For Helen, the goal is simple: being able to comfortably take part in conversations, particularly when there are several people around. That may come down to understanding what the hearing aids she already has can do and whether an accessory or connection could make them work better for her.

For anyone struggling with hearing aids, Ehman's advice is to ask for help. She holds free hearing clinics at Unison at Kerby Centre, where people can have their hearing assessed, discuss problems they're having with their hearing aids or get help with servicing and connections.

Sometimes the solution is finding a better way to get the right sound directly to your ears.

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Easy egg recipes

News Canada

One key to staying resourceful in the kitchen is choosing easy and versatile ingredients that fit multiple needs throughout the week. Take eggs as an example:

When you have eggs, you have a variety of mealtime options. A single carton of eggs serves as a versatile foundation for breakfasts, lunches, dinners and snacks. If you don't have a recipe in mind, no problem. Eggs lend themselves to practical solutions like "non-recipe recipes"—cooking with whatever simple ingredients you already have on hand. This approach can help transform leftovers and basic fridge staples into easy, comforting and impressive dishes.



Pass the shakshuka! Photo: NewsCanada

Here are three quick, budget-friendly ideas you can try this week:

No-bake shakshuka: Heat up a standard jar of your favourite store-bought tomato sauce in a pan and season it to your liking. Make a few small wells in the liquid and crack your eggs straight into the sauce to poach gently on the stovetop. The eggs help your body better absorb essential nutrients in the tomatoes, and the pairing provides an elevated, restaurant-quality meal on a budget. Pro tip: Including toasted, buttered bread helps scoop up all of the deliciousness of this dish.



Everything's alright with a pot of fried rice. Photo: NewsCanada

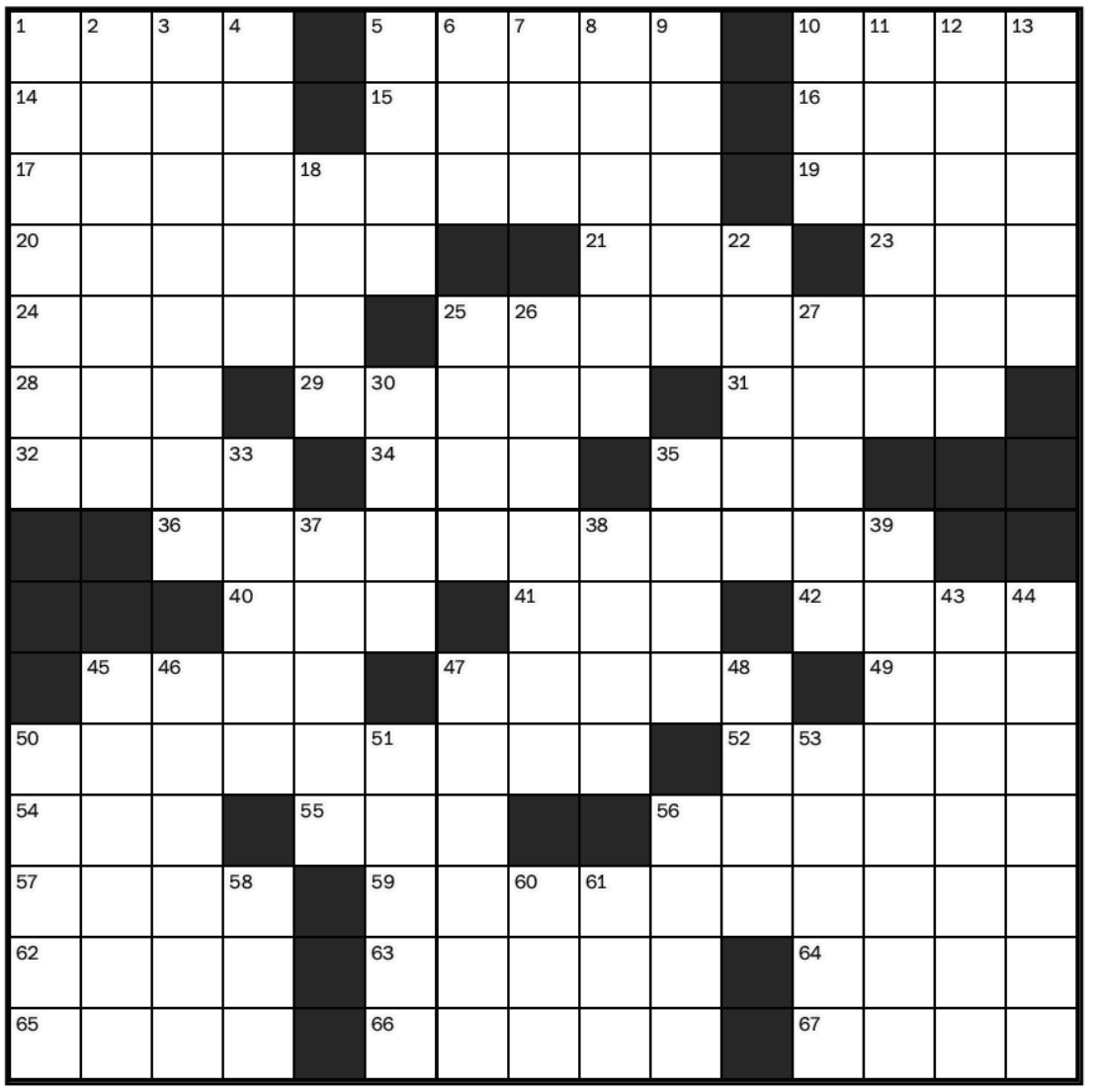
Easy egg fried rice: Perfect for using up leftover rice, produce or frozen vegetables. Simply sauté whatever chopped vegetables you have, push them to the side of the pan, and scramble a couple of eggs directly over the rice. Tossing everything together with a splash of soy sauce creates a satisfying, high-protein meal that can save food from going to waste.

Devilled egg dip: Reinvent your snacking routine by turning hard boiled eggs into a creamy, shareable dip. Simply mash hard boiled eggs with plain Greek yogurt or cottage cheese, a touch of mayonnaise and a pinch each of salt, pepper and paprika. Serve alongside raw veggies or pita chips to get the full benefits of high-quality protein in a simple, budget-conscious meal.

You can find more recipes, as well as cooking tips, at eggs.ca.

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Puzzle Page • Solutions → p 17



Across

1. Snack (on)
5. Muscle twitch
10. Endure
14. Really feel yesterday's workout 15. Country singer Tucker
16. Suspecting
17. Pregame activity in a parking lot
19. Place in the overhead bin, say 20. Disconnect from work, colloquially
21. "__ the season ... "
23. "The Simpsons" bartender
24. Silky semisynthetic fabric
25. Cursor control on some older laptops
28. Oral health org.
29. Indigenous language with Dakota and Lakota dialects
31. Charged particles
32. Ulrich of Metallica
34. Well-worn pencil
35. London's __ Gardens
36. Like a place with free treats and a full water dish, presumably
40. Language similar to Thai
41. Couple
42. __-care
45. Senior-year dance
47. Hilarious folks
49. "U slay me!"
50. Wells Fargo rival
52. "Deck the Halls" plant
54. Use oars
55. Daily grind
56. "The Situation Room" co host Brown
57. "Waterloo" pop group
59. Point to future plot developments, or a feature of 17-, 25-, 36-, and 50-Across
62. Small glass container
63. Energy sources
64. California wine region
65. __ Grey tea
66. Clown's perch
67. Tiny

Down

1. One with innate talent
2. Anthem played at Blue Jays home games
3. Boat-building spot
4. Word of welcome
5. Male deer
6. Butter square
7. Singer DiFranco
8. Grammar subject
9. Facetious response to "How did you do tha
10. Part of LAX
11. Marvel superhero who shrinks to the size bug
12. Bar seats
13. Spa handout
18. Revs, as an engine
22. Hit the slopes
25. Guided visit
26. Add insult to injury
27. Soup dishes
30. Deets
33. Jam band highlights
35. Pretzel shape
37. Fortnite enthusiast, e.g.
38. "Return of the Jedi" creature
39. Gave quite an earful
43. Bounces clumsily
44. Take off
45. Extreme fear
46. Venue that sells shellfish
47. Squeal on
48. Iranian ruler until 1979
50. Really yen for
51. Enthusiasts
53. Muscat resident
56. Hissed "Hey!"
58. __-purpose flour
60. Big name in camping gear
61. Pipe bend

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			8		9			
	3			5	1		7	9
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Numbers don't lie: Elder Abuse

Unison Staff

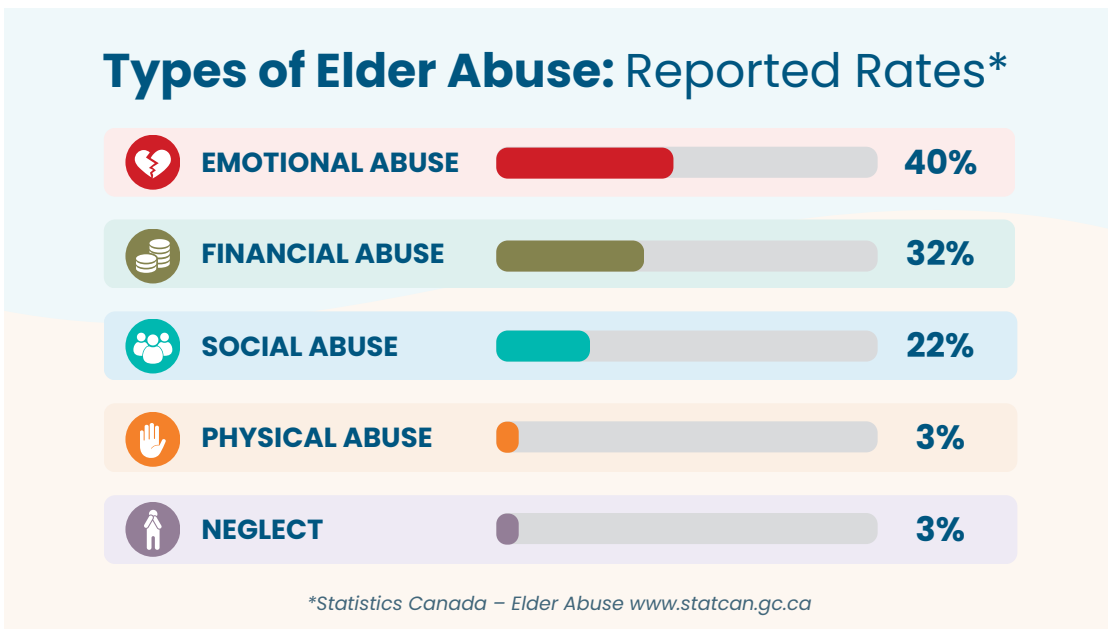
When you need a helping hand and that hand hurts you, it's called elder abuse. It can be physical, emotional, sexual or financial, and it includes neglect

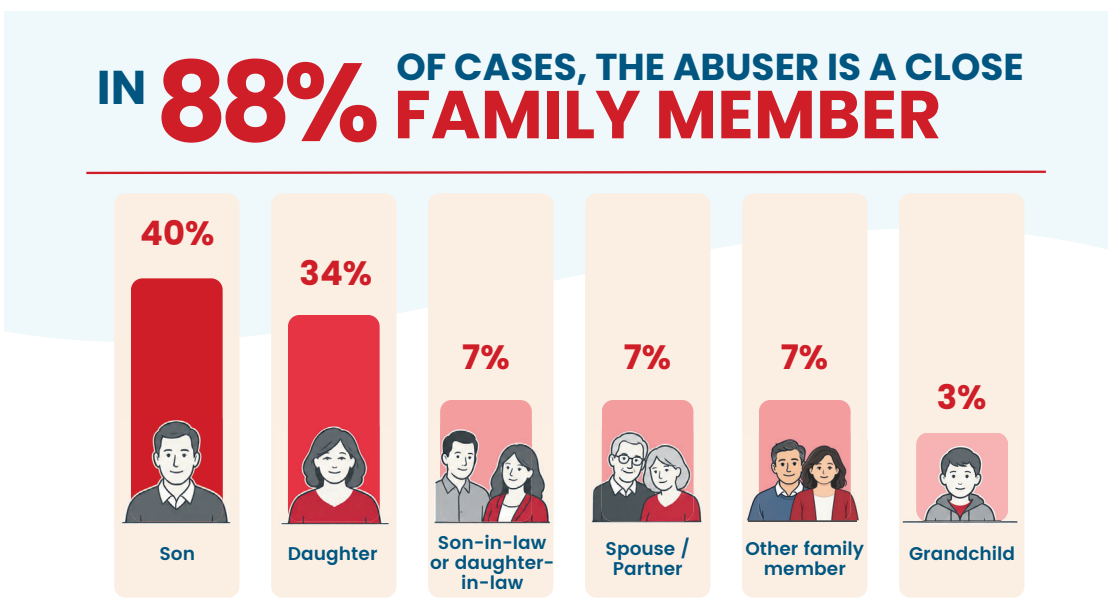
Statistics Canada reports that 23,000 Alberta seniors experience elder abuse each year. That's a small city's worth of people - roughly the population of Camrose, AB.

And the true number is probably much higher. Only one in 10 cases of elder abuse is reported in Canada, and elder abuse support organizations estimate the real figure is closer to one in six.

Elder abuse is far more common than most of us want to believe, and it is happening to someone you know.

Unison has an elder abuse shelter for seniors actively fleeing abuse, and an **Elder Abuse Resource Line** (EARL) that can help you understand what elder abuse is, what signs to look for, and how to get help. The call is free and anonymous. **Call EARL at 403-705-3250.**





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Membership feedback week

Erin Reeder

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To ensure everyone can enjoy all membership-based activities at the Veiner Centre, we will be conducting a Membership Check Week from November 23rd to 27th.

Please make sure your membership is current so you can continue participating in programs and activities without interruption. Keeping your membership active helps support the programs, activities, and services that make the Veiner Centre such a great place for everyone.

You can renew your membership at the Veiner Centre reception or contact us at 403-529-8307, or online at https://veinercentre.wildapricot.org/membership/ .

This also helps us update our system and correct any errors with renewal dates that may have occurred. We will also be conducting random membership checks throughout the year to ensure all participants have an active membership.

Lastly, we will be handing out surveys during Membership Check Week to collect feedback from our members and help keep the Centre running smoothly. Complete a survey online or at the front desk and you'll be entered into a draw to win a free Bistro lunch! Two winners will be drawn on January 20th and notified that day.

To take each survey, please scan the qr codes (each one links you to the survey under the heading). Each compledted survey earns you an entry for the draw.

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- Don't have a shovel? Contact Unison at Veiner Centre — one may be available to borrow.

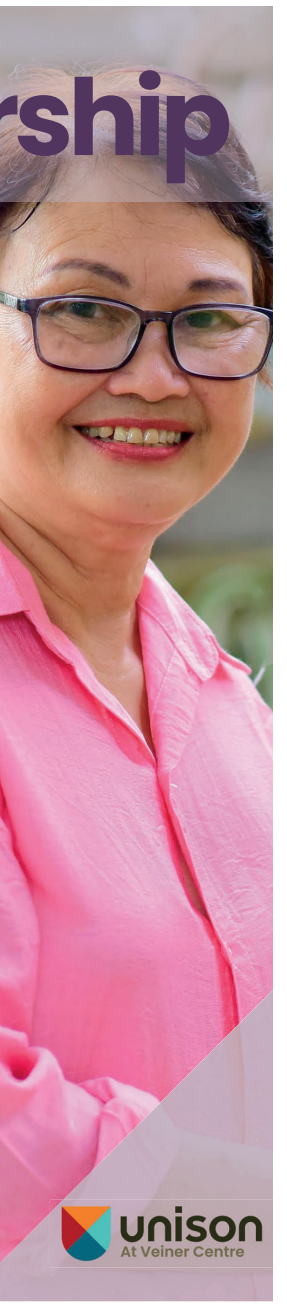
Scan the QR code for more information or to register as a resident needing Snow Angel assistance.

Snow Angels is a neighbour-helping-neighbour initiative. Volunteers are not formally matched with residents.

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From support to dependence and abuse: Crossed boundaries

Deborah Kisel

Growing older should be a time to slow down, enjoy life, and have the freedom to make your own choices. Older adults should be able to turn to loved ones for support without giving up their independence or sense of control. Yet abuse, neglect, and mistreatment can sometimes happen quietly within families and go unnoticed or unreported. When these behaviours come from people we love and trust, they can be especially difficult to recognize and address.

One growing concern is when an adult child or grandchild moves into their parent's or grandparent's home and becomes dependent on them for housing, food, transportation, or financial support. It often begins out of compassion and wanting to help their loved one through challenging times. They may be dealing with job loss, financial hardship, divorce, addiction, or mental health challenges, and the older adult may simply want to help. What starts as temporary support can gradually become long-term dependency and lead to unhealthy or blurred boundaries.

The situation becomes more concerning when the older adult is expected to continue providing support despite having their own health concerns, along with limited finances and resources. The adult child or grandchild may initially offer to help with bills, banking, or transportation, but over time that help can shift into taking control of financial decisions. The boundary is crossed when the older adult's choices are restricted, money is taken without their consent, or they are made to feel pressured, afraid, or unable to say no.

Dependency alone does not prove that abuse is occurring, but it can increase the risk, especially when it is combined with coercive control, resentment, pressure, or a belief that the older adult's money or property belongs to the person causing harm. Risk factors to watch for include reliance on the older adult for housing, money, transportation, or other necessities; a shared living arrangement with unclear boundaries or expectations; depression, addiction, or other mental-health concerns; limited employment or fewer opportunities for independence; and a strong sense of entitlement to the older adult's home, savings, or property.

The older adult may fear that speaking up will leave their loved one homeless, affect their relationship with their child or grandchildren, divide the family, or expose them to further blame. They may also see providing continued support as part of their role as a parent, even when the relationship and situation have become unhealthy.

The Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council defines elder abuse as any action or inaction by a person(s) in a trusting relationship that causes harm and distress to an older adult. Several forms of abuse may occur at the same time, including financial abuse (misusing money through fraud, trickery, theft or force), psychological or emotional abuse (using threats, intimidation, humiliation, manipulation, or isolation), physical abuse (causing physical harm or using inappropriate restraint), neglect (failing to provide necessary care, support, or protection), medication abuse (the misuse of an older person's medications and prescriptions by withholding medications, overmedicating or sedating), and sexual abuse (all unwanted forms of sexual activity, behaviour, assault, or harassment). Financial and emotional abuse are the most common forms of abuse.

If you are concerned that an older adult may be experiencing abuse, begin by reaching out calmly and privately. Let them know that you care and that you are ready to listen, and that they are not alone. A supportive conversation can help them feel safer and make it easier to speak up when they are ready.

Respect for the older adult's autonomy is essential. To support an older adult who may be experiencing harm, it is important to listen without judgment. Avoid pressuring the older adult or making decisions on their behalf. Offer information and support, respect their pace, and continue to remind them that help is available and you are there to help or listen if they want. Even if they are not ready to make changes, being heard and believed can restore a sense of dignity and control and help them regain their self-confidence.

Sometimes just knowing that someone cares and is willing to stand beside them can make a difference and give them the courage to take the next step.





Life at the Top

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Nanoparticles show potential as new treatment for Alzheimer's

Gillian Rutherford

A family of nanoparticles — tiny, biodegradable molecules commonly used to deliver drugs to patients — shows promise in treating Alzheimer's disease without additional medication, according to new research from a University of Alberta neuroscientist.

In a study published in Alzheimer's & Dementia, the journal of the Alzheimer's Association, Dr. Satyabrata Kar and colleagues report finding improved symptoms and reversal of the disease at the molecular and cellular level in mice with Alzheimer's following treatment with a class of nanoparticles called poly-lactic-co-glycolic acid, or PLGA. The nanoparticles have been approved for drug delivery in humans in the United States, Europe and Canada.

"These molecules have a long-standing safety record and are biodegradable," says Kar, a professor in the Department of Medicine.

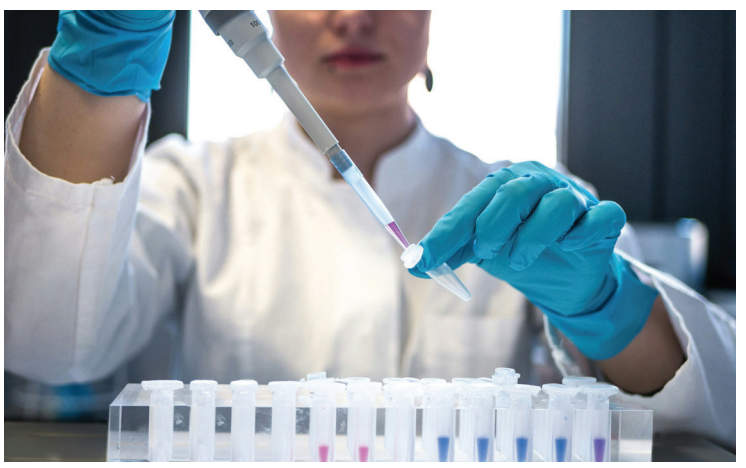
"There is really no effective treatment available for Alzheimer's right now," he says. "Most treatments are for symptoms only; they do not stop or halt the progression of the disease. And two recently approved disease-modifying treatments have been reported to have severe side-effects in some patients."

About 750,000 Canadians live with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, according to Statistics Canada. Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia and is the ninth leading cause of death in Canada.

PLGA nanoparticles were first used as biodegradable sutures and were subsequently approved as vehicles for drug delivery in the 1980s. More than 20 drugs are now delivered using PLGA nanoparticles, which can be modified to target certain organs or parts of the body to reduce side-effects.

Kar started working with PLGA nanoparticles in 2020 and has published previous studies showing they protect neurons against toxicity and prevent the aggregations of neuronal proteins associated with Alzheimer's disease.

The latest paper shows that PLGA nanoparticles delivered directly to the brains of animals with Alzheimer's prevented the overproduction and buildup of beta-amyloid peptides, which lead to dangerous plaques in the brains of Alzheimer's patients. The researchers also saw improvements in the cognitive and memory functions of the animals following PLGA treatment.



Nanoparticles have huge potential to treat Alzheimer's. PhotoL Julia Koblitz

Kar plans further testing of these nanoparticles to validate his results. He is currently collaborating with other researchers to examine how these nanoparticles cross the blood-brain barrier and to increase their half-life so they remain effective longer. Another collaboration is looking at how labelled PLGA nanoparticles can bind to brain plaques, allowing for faster diagnosis of the disease.

Kar is unsure exactly why the nanoparticles have such a pronounced effect in Alzheimer's, but notes they have impacts on several disease-causing factors. He also says another lab in the United States has recently reproduced some of his results, a sign of further interest in their potential.

"Currently, I am trying to get resources to expedite this project to help patients," Kar says.

"I've been working on Alzheimer's for 30 years and I've never been so excited."





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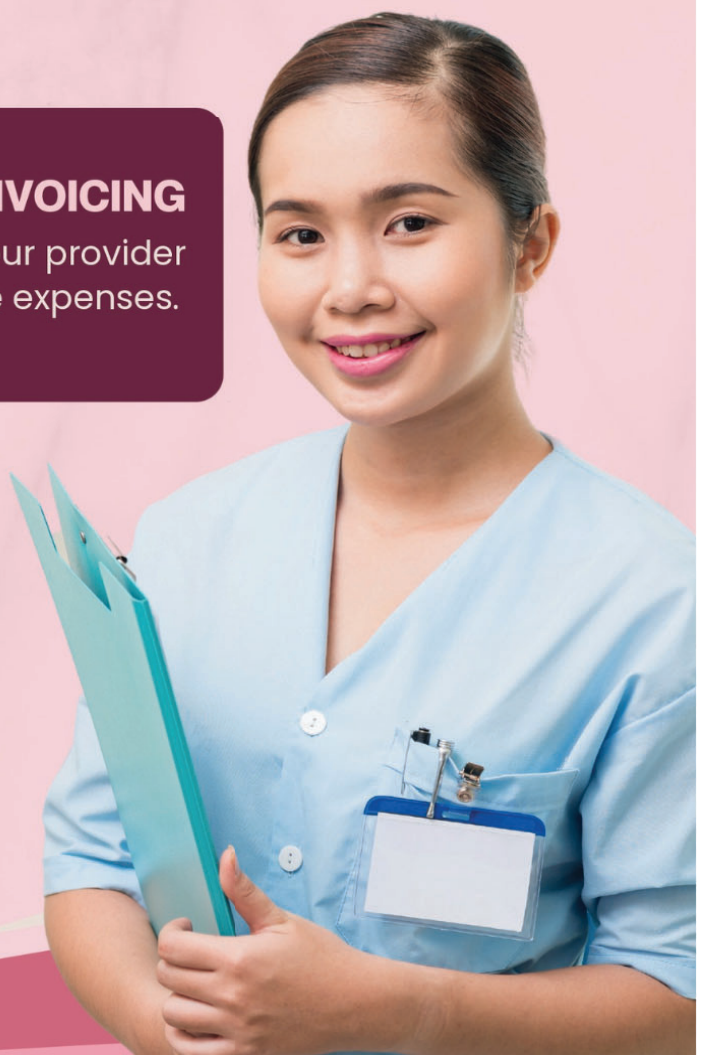
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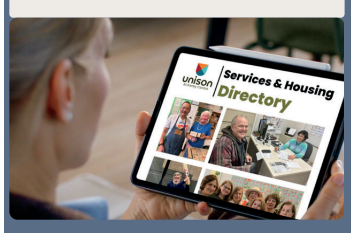
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Opioids only useful for short-term pain relief: study

Gillian Rutherford, University of Alberta Folio

Researchers from the University of Alberta have found that opioids are best used for acute pain relief for four weeks or less, and may cause more harm than good when used for chronic pain for more than 12 weeks.

In a recently published paper in the British Journal of General Practice, the team did a systematic review of 27 randomized controlled trials comparing opioids with non-opioid pain management for the treatment of osteoarthritis or chronic low back pain. The trials examined the ability of opioids such as oxycodone, buprenorphine, oxymorphone, hydromorphone and morphine to produce clinically meaningful pain relief — defined as 30 per cent or more — over time.

Their analysis showed that, although opioids did work in the first four weeks of acute pain, they provided little or no benefit over longer periods, and may worsen pain control beyond 12 weeks by potentially increasing the patient's sensitivity to pain.

"If someone breaks a limb, has surgery or a dental problem, where you anticipate the problem is going to resolve in a relatively short time, it's probably OK to give an opioid for that," says principal investigator Scott Garrison, professor of family medicine, director of the Pragmatic Trials Collaborative and member of the PEER (Patients, Experience, Evidence, Research) team.

"Opioids still have a role in managing acute pain. But if the patient has a condition where this pain is going to be chronic, I think you should reconsider whether you should be offering an opioid, because you may only be giving very short-term pain relief with the possibility of worse pain in the long run, not to mention other potential problems from the opioids."

The research team recommends that further research on opioids be done to evaluate analgesia at multiple time points. They were also critical of a trial design known as "enriched enrolment randomized withdrawal" or EERW. Rather than testing patients on new opioid prescriptions, it provides opioid medication to all participants for a number of weeks before the trial period, includes only patients who respond, and then withdraws opioids from the control group.

"This trial design was excluded (from our analysis) because of a very high risk of bias — specifically, high risk of selection bias, unblinding of control participants as they withdraw from opioids, and the potential for development of physical dependence or opioid-induced hyperalgesia during the run-in period," the U of A team reports.

Garrison says his study's results are particularly important for medical fields that see patients with chronic pain, such as family medicine, orthopedics and rheumatology.

Since completing the study a couple of years ago, he has shared the results with his own family practice patients with chronic pain.

"It's very hard to get people off of opioids once they have started them, but when patients are given this information about potential harms, they don't want the drug," he says. "Absolutely every patient who is told this up front ends up not taking the opioid. It's so hard to stop, but it's so easy not to start if people are fully informed."



Dr. Scott Garrison. Photo: UA Folio

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