

Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging and Technology

Symposium Title: Perspectives on Gender and Unpaid Caregiving

The following symposium will highlight the gendered aspects of caregiving from three diverse perspectives. Three papers which will be presented in this symposium are: Women's Unpaid Caregiving in the Context of Nova Scotia by Joanne Hussey, Gender, Caregiving and HIV/AIDS by Erika Burger and Caregiving in the Context of Intersecting Inequities: The Case of African Nova Scotian Women authored by Barbara Clow, Josephine Etowa, Wanda Thomas Bernard and presented by Barbara Clow. These three perspectives on gender and unpaid caregiving highlight the experiences of women providing unpaid care in diverse contexts. Women's Unpaid Caregiving in the Context of Nova Scotia explores the demographic, economic, social and cultural profile of the Nova Scotia population as it structures the perspective of rural and urban women involved in unpaid caregiving. Gender, Caregiving and HIV/AIDS explores how the gendered nature of the pandemic has a bearing on the experience of caregivers caring for a person who is living with HIV/AIDS (PHA). Caregiving in the Context of Intersecting Inequities: The Case of African Nova Scotian Women will discuss ways in which gender roles combine with cultural and community norms to foster shared assumptions about caregiving in African Nova Scotian families and communities. This symposium explores unpaid caregiving from the perspective(s) of women in urban and rural areas of Nova Scotia, perspectives and gendered experiences of caregivers in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and a gender and diversity perspective of rural women caregivers of the African Nova Scotian community.

Title: Women's Unpaid Caregiving in the Context of Nova Scotia

Author: Joanne Hussey

Presenter: Joanne Hussey

Description:

This presentation is based on findings of the Healthy Balance Research Program, a five-year CIHR-funded program investigating work/life balance and women's unpaid caregiving in Nova Scotia.

This paper explores the demographic, economic, social and cultural profile of the Nova Scotia population as it structures the perspective of rural and urban women involved in unpaid caregiving. Nova Scotia has an aging population and is experiencing significant out-migration. The high rates of disability and chronic illness experienced by the Nova Scotia

population also create significant needs for unpaid care. Caregiving which is unpaid and provided by women in the home has increased as a result of cuts to the healthcare system and a culture which identifies unpaid care as the role and responsibility of women and families. The tendency to provide care to community members as well as family members, in the context of the close-knit nature of rural communities, intensifies the expectation of women in communities to provide unpaid care. Women in Nova Scotia have been found to be caring for a friend, neighbour or co-worker in addition to close family members. The combined geography, community, culture, social, health and economic factors structuring unpaid caregiving allows for a unique perspective from women involved in this work in both rural and urban locations in Nova Scotia.

Title: Gender, Caregiving and HIV/AIDS

Author: Erika Burger

Presenter: Erika Burger

Description: Beyond the statistics of sex-based differences in infection rates, there are profound differences in the underlying causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS infections in men and women, which reflect differences in biology, sexual behaviour, social attitudes and pressures, economic power and vulnerability. Their vulnerability to contracting HIV and the inequity that women and girls suffer as a result of HIV/AIDS, serves as an indication of their general status in society and the discrimination they encounter in all fields, including health, education and employment. It is for these reasons that HIV/AIDS is inherently a gendered pandemic.

This paper will consider how the gendered nature of the pandemic has a bearing on the experience of caregivers caring for a person who is living with HIV/AIDS (PHA). The paper will focus on the experiences of and issues faced by: male caregivers caring for male PHAs, female caregivers who are also PHAs, the roles of girls and boys in child-headed households or in households where one or both parents are PHAs, and grandmothers caring for orphans whose parents have died due to HIV/AIDS. By focusing on these groups of caregivers, the paper will cover issues of gender, caregiving and HIV/AIDS in both developed and developing countries and will explore the effects of stigma and discrimination experienced by PHAs and their caregivers.

Title: Caregiving in the Context of Intersecting Inequities: The Case of African Nova Scotian Women

Authors: Barbara Clow, Josephine Etowa, Wanda Thomas Bernard

Presenter: Barbara Clow

Description:

This presentation is based on the findings of a three-year CIHR-funded research project, “On the Margins”, which centres on an investigation of health status, health care delivery, and health services utilization among African Canadian women and their families residing in rural and remote regions of Nova Scotia.

Drawing on data generated through a series of community consultations and more than 200 in-depth interviews, the paper will open with a discussion of the ways in which gender roles combine with cultural and community norms to foster shared assumptions about caregiving in African Nova Scotian families and communities. Because Black women are seen as “strong”, because they are female, and because their lives are deeply embedded in family and community, they assume – as do others – that they should, can and will provide care for friends, neighbours and relatives. While these expectations and the work involved in caring for others may weigh heavily on African Nova Scotian women, threatening their health and well-being, their efforts both to care and to remain healthy are further compromised by racial, geographic and socio-economic inequities. The remainder of the paper will consequently focus on the ways in which intersecting inequities define the caregiving experiences of Black women in rural and remote Nova Scotia communities.