

**Abstracts for Healthy Balance Symposium at the Festival of International Conferences on Caregiving, Disability, Aging and Technology. June 16-19, 2006, Toronto, ON
Submitted December 11, 2006**

1. Symposium title and overall abstract

Caregiving & employment: A healthy balance

Pamela Fancey, Mount Saint Vincent University

The Healthy Balance Research Program is a five-year program of multi-disciplinary research about the relationships between women's health and well-being and their paid and unpaid work, including unpaid caregiving. This symposium gives an overview of the research process, including its engagement of community and policy audiences, and the research findings as they relate to paid employment while caregiving, with particular attention to gender differences and similarities. The symposium concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for policy and program initiatives at both provincial and federal levels.

2. Individual papers in order

Paper One

Abbreviated title: Caregiver satisfaction & stress

Caregiver satisfaction & stress: Does employment make a difference?

Sheva Medjuck, Mount Saint Vincent University

It is well recognized that the prevalence of caregiving has increased due to changing labour force participation patterns, the aging population, and deinstitutionalization of dependent adults. These demographic shifts have resulted in caregivers assuming multiple paid and unpaid roles. The extent to which employment affects caregiver satisfaction and well-being will be explored in this presentation.

Results from a 2005 population-based survey of unpaid caregiving in Nova Scotia will be presented. Among Nova Scotians, aged 19 to 64, 38% provided care to someone because of a long term condition, mental health illness, or temporary difficult time. In addition to caregiving, 68% were also working for pay or profit, the majority in full-time positions. Contrary to popular belief, employed caregivers were as likely to be involved in caregiving activities as were nonemployed caregivers of the same age group and for the most part, employment did not predict caregiver stress or satisfaction, with the exception of stress among women. Employed caregivers did differ from nonemployed caregivers on key socio-demographic variables (e.g., age, education, income) and access to resources. The implications of these findings for caregivers and recipients of care will be discussed. These findings will allow us to address appropriate support policies for caregivers assuming multiple roles.

Paper Two

Abbreviated Title: Work-family conflict: Occupational differences?

Work-family conflict: Does type of occupation make a difference?

Susan Kirkland, Dalhousie University

Population aging poses many challenges for Canadian employers and employees. Not only is the workforce aging, but many employees take on caregiving responsibilities as a result of increased life expectancies of aging parents and government policies promoting community care. Despite increased labor force participation by women, expectations that they will continue to provide this care have not changed. In fact, with population aging, the demands on family caregivers are only going to rise.

This presentation will highlight findings from a 2005 population-based survey of unpaid caregiving in Nova Scotia. To understand the potential costs of caregiving for employed caregivers, we set out to explore the interference between work and family responsibilities among traditional occupational categories for a sub-sample of caregivers aged 19-64, who provide care to someone with a long term health problem and work for pay or profit. Initial hypotheses suggested caregivers in management/professional occupations would have more flexibility and control in their work environments, and would therefore experience less interference. Although caregivers in this group did have access to a larger number of support benefits, they failed to differ from caregivers in other occupation categories in terms of the extent to which family interferes with work (FIW), work interferes with family (WIF), and the number of job costs they experience. The implications of these findings for employed persons may point to the need for policies in certain areas.

Paper Three

Abbreviated Title: Work, income, and caregiving: Complicated stories

Work, income, and caregiving: Complicated stories from diverse women

Robin Stadnyk and Brenda Beagan, Dalhousie University

While survey data can provide us with an overview of employment trends among caregivers, some groups' experiences are not well represented. This paper is about women caregivers and the choice and constraints they face regarding employment. The paper comes out of the portrait component of the Healthy Balance Research Program. Data were collected from multiple qualitative interviews and observations of 12 women caregivers from six groups (Lesbian, African Nova Scotian, Newcomer Canadians, Person with Disabilities, Urban and Rural Nova Scotia residents).

Women in this study represented diverse situations. Five were in the paid labour force, one was an “at-home” parent, three were on social assistance, two were retired and one was a student. The women chose their employment based on their caregiving demands. For example, four out of the five paid workers were self-employed in order to enable their caring work. The people who were not in the labour force often had incomes that were context dependent and vulnerable to reduction because of their caregiving situation. For example, the social assistance benefit maybe reduced because the individual moved in with her care recipient. Results point to the conflict between responsibilities related to care work and other roles. This presentation will present implications for both work place and income support policies.

Paper Four

Abbreviated Title: Rx for caregivers: Addressing policy and program

Rx for caregivers: Addressing policy and program needs

Brigitte Neuman, Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Presentations within this symposium have shown the relationship between employment and caregiving for women and men in Nova Scotia. Many of these findings are consistent with those in other Canadian jurisdictions. The next step is to analyze the policy implications of these findings, to identify ways to support employed caregivers in the workplace, with particular attention to gender differences and similarities. Policy and program initiatives need to be responsive to the diversity of caregiving situations and the needs of both caregivers and care recipients. Employer supports, changes in tax and transfer programs, and improvements in community and long-term care provision will be discussed.