



Seniors' Voice

Newsletter of the Hamilton Council on Aging

Message from the Chair

It is very exciting for me to introduce this first newsletter of the Hamilton Council on Aging. The Council is a new organization that promises to be a force for improving the lives of older adults in Hamilton. Two grants from the Hamilton Community Foundation have been instrumental in helping us get started. We have hired an Executive Director, Lynn Sage, who will work with the Board of Directors in implementing the activities of the Council and helping to build a strong and enduring organization. I am delighted to welcome Lynn whose previous experience working with the Regional Geriatric Program Central and, prior to that, with the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat will be invaluable in helping the HCoA move forward.

St. Peter's Hospital has generously provided the Council with office space for Lynn and administrative support. We are very appreciative of this partnership, and pleased to be working collaboratively with an organization whose mission of "Enhancing Lives" complements so well the aims of the Council on Aging.

The Council held its official launch at Liuna Station in October 2006, which was attended by close to 400 people. Dr. Willie Molloy gave an informative talk on healthy aging, following which we were entertained by the Golden Age Variety Show. In June the Council hosted a public event at the McNab Street YWCA at which pharmacist Irene Hogan made a presentation about safe medication use for seniors. The Council plans to host two public events every year and we hope to see all of you there.

When the Council was in its very early stages of development, we conducted nine community consultations with over 100 individuals. The key issues affecting seniors that emerged from those consultations were: financial independence/security; access to health services and home support services; safe and affordable housing; and affordable and accessible transportation. These important issues will guide our activities and efforts. I am pleased to announce that we have recently received funding for two programs that will begin to address some of these issues, namely financial security and access to services. These projects will begin in the fall of 2007.

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*The Hamilton Council
on Aging is a United
Way Agency*



*Funding for this project
is provided by the
Hamilton Community
Foundation*

The first program is funded by the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton and will focus on addressing and eliminating barriers to accessing community support services for seniors from diverse communities in Hamilton. The second is funded by the Hamilton Community Foundation and will seek to increase the number of qualifying seniors in Hamilton who are accessing benefit entitlements such as GIS and Spousal Survivor Benefits. Both projects will be implemented with the help of senior volunteers.

The Council is also working with Dr. Margaret Denton from the McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies and Dr. Jenny Ploeg from the McMaster School of Nursing on the next steps of their study regarding older adults' knowledge and awareness of community support services.

We will soon be launching a membership campaign and hope you, our readers, will join the Council and encourage other individuals and organizations to join as well. We also hope that many of you will volunteer to assist the Council in the programs described above and in our other activities. We look forward to your participation and support as the Council works to fulfill its mission of "...educating and advocating for improved aging experiences for older adults through a collaborative network of individuals and organizations."

- Dr. Carolyn J. Rosenthal



GET INVOLVED!

If you are interested in participating in the activities of the Hamilton Council on Aging or receiving information from the Council, please call 905-777-3837, ext. 12238 or complete the form below, and return by mail or fax to:

Hamilton Council on Aging
c/o St. Peter's Hospital, 88 Maplewood Avenue, Hamilton ON L8M 1W9
Fax: 905-575-5121

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

- Add me to the mailing list
- I would be interested in volunteering with the Council
- I would be interested in participating on a project steering committee

Hamilton Council on Aging

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

TWO EXCITING NEW PROGRAMS!

The Hamilton Council on Aging has been very fortunate to receive support from the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation to implement two initiatives focused on helping seniors to access financial entitlements and improving access to community support services for seniors from diverse communities. The Council is very excited about these programs and their potential to improve the quality of life of many seniors in Hamilton.

1. Seniors helping Seniors to Access Financial Entitlements

The intent of this program is to increase the number of qualifying seniors in Hamilton who are accessing income benefits such as Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and other income security benefits to which they may be entitled. This will occur through a combination of approaches including recruitment and training of senior volunteers to work with other seniors, marketing and outreach to eligible seniors and assistance to these seniors in applying to receive benefits.

2. Improving Access to Community Support Services for Seniors from Diverse Communities

This initiative will focus on addressing and eliminating barriers to accessing community support services for seniors from diverse communities in Hamilton.

We intend to implement strategies to address issues such as language, social isolation, culture, transportation and other systemic barriers. Where appropriate, seniors from the diverse community will be recruited as volunteers to provide outreach to their own communities. At the same time, education to agencies and service providers will aim to improve their ability to address the needs of diverse seniors.

For more information, or if you are a senior and interested in volunteering in either of these programs, please call Lynn Sage at the Hamilton Council on Aging, (905) 777-3837, x12238.



COUNCIL ON AGING WEBSITE

The Council is currently working to develop its own website to be launched later this fall. The purpose of the site is to raise awareness of about the Council and our key priorities and activities, to provide regular information and updates about programs, services, volunteer opportunities and current issues important to seniors. The site will also be a way for you to provide feedback or ask questions.



Seniors Safe Medication Use Workshop

On June 25, 2007, the Hamilton Council on Aging hosted a very successful workshop at the YWCA on McNab Street about safe medication use practices for seniors.

This very informative session was presented in partnership with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. Our guest speaker was pharmacist Irene Hogan. Over 70 seniors attended this session

Important Messages from the Workshop

- Seniors in Hamilton make up about 15% of the population, but on average receive 28-40% of all medications prescribed.
- Seniors are often taking several medications which can interact with each other and cause many side effects.
- Remember that drugs can include prescription medicines, over-the-counter medicines, social drugs (e.g. alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco), traditional & herbal remedies and street drugs.
- **ALL** drugs change the way your body normally functions.
- Used together, drugs may alter the effects of each other.
- **ALL** drugs can be harmful if you don't use them wisely.
- Store medications in a cool, dry place away from sunlight and humidity.
- Keep your medicines in the original container unless you use a special "pill box".
- Never throw out medication in your garbage or down the sink or toilet.

- Return old medicines to your pharmacist.

How Can My Pharmacist Help?

- Answer questions about my medications.
- Help me choose the right non-prescription drug if I need one.
- Put my drugs in an easy-to-open container, make a larger and easy-to-read label and discuss how to store my medications.
- Discuss how to take my medications appropriately, possible side effects and non-drug options to improve my health.
- Refer me to the proper resource e.g. diabetes centres, support groups, physicians, dieticians, foot care etc.

St. Peter's

Enhancing
Lives

St. Peter's Successful Aging Speakers' Series

"Depression: The need for Early Recognition and Vigorous Treatment"
Presented by: **Dr. Maxine Lewis, M.D.**

- Learn the importance of recognizing the symptoms of depression.
- Receive guidance on when to seek treatment.
- Learn about the evidence for different therapies available to treat depression.

FREE Admission. Refreshments served.
Wednesday October 3rd, 2007
1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.
The Gathering Space
St. Peter's Residence at Chedoke
125 Redfern Avenue, Hamilton

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Ivy German at ext. 12418 or igerman@stpetes.ca

New MedsCheck Program: Free Medication Review

In July 2007, the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announced a new program called MedsCheck.

What is MedsCheck?

MedsCheck is a voluntary program that gives patients an opportunity once a year to consult with their pharmacist on a one-on-one basis on how to manage their medications.

Who is Eligible?

To qualify for a MedsCheck medication review, a patient must be currently taking a minimum of three chronic prescription medications.

Who May Benefit the Most?

Patients who:

- have several chronic medical conditions and are taking several medications;
- have recently been released from hospital;
- have had major changes to their medicine schedule;
- are taking "high-alert" medications, such as opiates or digoxin;
- may have trouble managing their medication.

What Happens During the MedsCheck Medication Review?

During the one-on-one interview, patients should bring any medication containers, vitamins and herbal remedies they are taking. Patients are welcome to bring their caregiver along.

During the medication review, the pharmacist will:

- Verify any patient allergies or chronic medication conditions;
- Collect personal, lifestyle and other health information;
- Review the patient's medications to help them better understand drug names, strengths, side effects and usage instructions;
- Ensure patients are taking their medications as directed and provide tips on how to get the best results from their medications;
- Answer any patient questions or concerns;
- Provide the patient with an up-to-date medication list to show their doctor, pharmacist or when admitted to hospital.

After the Medication Review

The pharmacist may follow-up with the patient by telephone to talk about any concerns, and may forward a copy of your medication list to your physician. Patients are encouraged to keep their medication list up-to-date at all times.

For more information about the MedsCheck program, or to book an appointment, speak to your pharmacist.

Source:

Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: Backgrounder "MedsCheck Program Provides Better Care for Patients", July 17, 2007, www.health.gov.on.ca.

Older Adults' Knowledge and Awareness of Community Support Services

The number and proportion of older adults in Canada is increasing. For many people the ability to care for themselves declines with increasing age and it becomes more difficult to remain independent in their own homes.

Community support services (CSSs) are delivered in the home or community to help persons coping with health or social problems to maintain their independence and quality of life. Examples of CSSs are food services, transportation services, day programs, volunteer visiting and caregiver support services.

Access to CSSs is challenging because there are many small agencies providing services, but there is not a central point of access to find the service that meets your needs.

While CSSs are available in the community, a recent study conducted by McMaster University found that people do not know where to turn to access services.

In a telephone survey conducted in the spring of 2006, over 1100 Hamilton residents aged 50 and over were asked to imagine themselves in a situation that involved a health or social problem. Respondents then were asked what they would do in such a situation and to name a community support service that they would turn to for help.

The study findings show that while the majority of older adults were able to identify that they would need help if they were experiencing a health or social problem, on average, only 21% could name a CSS they would turn to for help.

Respondents had greater awareness of services that provided assistance with caregiver burden, transportation, parental dementia, parental care, grief recovery and financial insecurity. There was little awareness of CSSs assisting with situations such as finding leisure activities, spousal alcohol addiction, chronic disease, safety and financial abuse.

On average, only 21% of older adults could name a community support service they would turn to for help.

In the next phase of the project, researchers Dr. Margaret Denton from the McMaster Centre for Gerontological Studies and Dr. Jenny Ploeg from the McMaster School of Nursing will work with community partners, including the Hamilton Council on Aging to develop strategies to improve awareness of CSSs for the public and amongst service providers themselves.

If you have comments or suggestions regarding strategies to improve awareness of CSS in our community, please contact Lynn Sage with the Hamilton Council on aging at 905-777-3837, ext. 12238 or lsage@stpetes.ca.

The full and summary reports of the study may be found at:

www.socsci.mcmaster.ca/gerontology

To request a copy by mail, please contact Jennifer Millen at 905-525-9140, ext. 23316.

A Portrait of Seniors in Canada

In February 2007, Statistics Canada released the report "A Portrait of Seniors in Canada". Last released in 1997, the purpose of the report is to provide an up-to-date picture of the general well-being of the current generation of seniors in Canada.

Report Highlights

- With millions of baby boomers about to turn 65, what it means to be a senior could change a great deal.
- Seniors are **living longer**. At the beginning of the 20th century, the average life expectancy was 47 for men and 50 years for women. In 2003, average life expectancy at birth for a Canadian was about 80 years.
- Financially, seniors are better off than they were a quarter century ago. They are better educated, more Internet savvy and active.
- Potential new challenges faced by this and upcoming generation of seniors, include **rising rates of obesity**. In 1978/79 only 11% of individuals aged 75 and over were considered obese; by 2004 that percentage had risen to 24%.
- While aging is associated with a decline in general health and the onset of different forms of activity limitations, a **large proportion of seniors are faring well**. For example, 77% of individuals aged 65 to 74 and 68% of people aged 75 or older described their health as good or very good.
- **Cancer and heart disease remain the leading causes of death** among seniors, while arthritis/rheumatism and high blood pressure remain the most prevalent chronic diseases.
- **More than one-quarter of all seniors in Canada were born abroad**. Most arrived before the 1960's and about half of them were born in Western European countries
- The **profile of immigrant seniors will change** in the coming years as younger immigrants from other regions age and the proportion of seniors who are members of a visible minority group rises.
- There have also been **changing trends in older adults labour force participation**. From the mid 1970's to mid 1990's the share of older men participating in the labour force steadily declined, but between 1996 and 2005 that share increased for older men and women.
- Many seniors are **engaged in volunteer activities**. In 2004, 39% of those aged 65 to 74 volunteered.
- Many seniors are also engaged in civic life. In 2003, about **three-quarters of seniors aged 65 to 74 said they had voted** in the last federal, provincial and municipal elections.
- In leisure time, **computer use has become an increasing part of everyday life** for many seniors. In 1997, only 3.4% of households headed by a senior had Internet access; by 2004, this had jumped to almost 23%.

The full report can be viewed on the Statistics Canada website at www.statcan.ca, or you can order a free copy by telephone at 1-800-267-6677 or by sending an e-mail to infostats@statcan.ca.

Community Events



Alzheimer Society 2007/2008 Education Series

Who should participate?

- Individuals diagnosed with a dementia/memory loss who want to learn more about their condition
- Individuals caring for someone with memory loss

Contact the Alzheimer Society at 905-529-7030

Free Public Lecture: Daniel Kuhn *Making Tough Eldercare Decisions*

Monday, October 29, 2007

7:30 – 9:00 p.m.

Halton Regional Building
South Auditorium

1151 Bronte Road (north of QEW)
Oakville

Contact: Alzheimer Society at 905-529-7030

VON Caregiver Education Series

- Managing stressful situations
- Staying on top of your care situation
- Tackling common emotions: guilt and anger
- Linking with community resources

Sessions begin in mid October.
Contact the VON for more info or to register at 905-523-1055 or

anne.valentin@von.ca



get into it!

The 2007 United Way Campaign is in Full Swing!

The Hamilton Council on Aging is proud to be an agency of the United Way. The United Way's network of programs and services provide a reliable and effective support system for individuals and families in need.

United Way is working to make our communities stronger and healthier places to live and work.

To donate, please call 905-527-4543 or visit

9th Annual Health Street Fair

Oral Health ♦ Smoking Cessation ♦ Foot Care ♦ Drug & Alcohol Use Prevention ♦ Blood Pressure Test ♦ Car & Bike Safety

Wednesday, October 17, 2007

11:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Hamilton Urban Core Community Health Centre

71 Rebecca Street, Hamilton

For more information, contact Haidar or Madeline at 905-522-3233.

Your Health in Your Hands!

A workshop series for people with chronic health issues.

Coping Techniques ♦ Communication with Health Care Providers and Family ♦ Healthy Eating ♦ Active Living ♦ Managing Pain, Fatigue and Difficult Emotions ♦ Managing Medications ♦ Problem Solving

Sessions begin Tuesday, October 2, 2007 and run for six weeks on Tuesday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon.

For more information, contact the North Hamilton Community Health Centre at 905-523-6611, ext. 305.

Shifting Gears – Senior Driving Seminar

- Hear expert information on a variety of driving-related issues relevant to senior motorists.
- Visit the information marketplace.
- Light refreshments will be served.

Thursday, October 25, 2007

12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Chandelier Place Reception & Conference Centre

660 Barton St., Stoney Creek

To register call 1-877-588-2088 and leave a message.