

Spiritual care is care that recognizes and responds to the needs of the human spirit. Our two studies, capturing the voices of residents and spiritual care providers, revealed the significance of faith in later life and led to recommendations for spiritual care.

Spiritual Resilience in Older Adults During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Research Question What is the role of faith in older adults' ability to cope with challenges, specifically those presented by the COVID-19 pandemic?

Methods – Virtual semi-structured interviews with 6 retirement home residents (Ontario) regarding their life narratives, faith, and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic

Key Findings

1. Faith relates to an older adult's worldviews that shape the ways they approach life, cope with challenging events, and experience a connection with themselves, others, and the sacred.
2. A person's understanding of themselves and their faith evolves over their lifetime. Older adults have rich life narratives and are still discovering new meaning at this stage of their lives.

Spiritual Care in Ontario Long-term Care [1]

Research Question What is the current state of spiritual care in long-term care in southern Ontario?

Methods – Exploratory quantitative survey of 177 LTCHs in southern Ontario & an online survey completed by spiritual care providers regarding care provision

Key Findings

1. Spiritual care providers bring a substantial skill set to long-term care, attending to needs of residents, families, and team members.
2. >50% of LTCHs do not employ anyone with skills or training in spiritual care. Spiritual care providers report widely varying hours and remuneration, and inconsistent expectations, standards, and sense of being valued and integrated into the circle of care.

Joint finding: Relationship with a spiritual care provider honours the role of faith and supports spiritual resilience.

Based on the findings of these two studies, we provide the following recommendations for spiritual care:

Appreciate the role and meaning of faith for residents by employing and integrating a spiritual care provider (1 FTE/160 residents)^[1] who has received training that recognizes the unique context of residential care.

Co-creation of programming between care providers and residents creates opportunities for all to participate in a community of belonging and honours the life stories of residents within diverse communities.