

PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS A CULTURAL NORM WITHIN THE SCHLEGEL VILLAGES

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Brief Description of Research or Project: Schlegel Villages (SV) is currently embarking on a culture change journey toward a social rather than an institutional model of living. Eight aspiration statements and an infrastructure that uses a participatory, collaborative approach guide and facilitate the culture change process. As part of this journey the organization is also shifting its structure from departmental “silos” to cross-functional neighbourhood teams. Moving forward, these significant organizational changes must be considered when putting new initiatives into place at the corporate level. The Research Institute for Aging (RIA) has recently undertaken a research-to-practice initiative to increase the level of physical activity of all residents with the overall goal of enhancing health and wellbeing. SV has had a successful Program for Active Living (PAL) in place for several years which offers functional assessments as well as structured group and one-on-one exercise programs. However, we believe there remain opportunities to get residents to “move more” - especially those residents who do not participate in the PAL program. The RIA is therefore exploring ways by which the culture change journey and shift to a neighbourhood-based organizational structure can be leveraged to provide residents with opportunities for more frequent, unstructured physical activity. To date an environmental scan of the twelve Schlegel Villages has identified key enablers and barriers to physical activity for residents in both Retirement Living and Long Term Care. In terms of knowledge transfer, the environmental scan also highlighted opportunities for education and changes in practice related to physical activity. **Why is this research important to profile at the Research Day 2014?** Society is generally aware that there is overwhelming research confirming the physical, cognitive and emotional benefits of physical activity for older adults yet research also suggests that over 60% of adults 60 years and older in the Americas are inactive (Hallal, Andersen, Bull, Guthold, Haskell & Ekelund, 2012). This discrepancy between knowledge and behaviour suggests the importance of the role of behaviour change mechanisms in persuading people to adopt healthy behaviours. Research is also beginning to show the potential detriments of a sedentary lifestyle (Blair, 2009) and conversely the benefits of daily activities such as washing dishes and carrying groceries in terms of cognitive health (Middleton, Manini, Simonsick, Harris, Barne, Tylavsky, Brach, Everhart & Yaffe, 2011). As a consequence of this research, the RIA has started a research-to-practice initiative with a goal to increase levels of physical activity (or reduce the amount of time spent sitting) for all residents within the SV. The success of any such initiative, however, is dependent on the characteristics of the organization (e.g. culture, organizational structure) in which the initiative is happening. This topic is important in two primary ways. First, it describes

a research-to-practice initiative of which the outcome is to increase levels of physical activity in residents thereby enabling them to maintain functional independence, improve their psychological state and delay the onset of cognitive challenges such as dementia. Second, it focuses on the process by which this initiative is being implemented which illustrates the need to consider and utilize the organizational culture and structure when putting such initiatives into practice.