

EVIDENCE IN THE MAKING

CARING FOR THE CAREGIVERS

Developing a Caregivers' Strategy for Ontario

THE CHALLENGE:

Every day, an army of unpaid, informal caregivers deploys to care for their loved ones. More than 96% of home and community care clients are supported by an unpaid caregiver. For people with dementia alone, that caregiving is valued at \$25–31 billion a year. Fully 60% of all caregivers juggle their caregiving with a job, most often full-time, costing Canadian businesses \$1.3 billion a year in lost days, missed hours or staff turnover, while taking a toll on the well-being of caregivers. There is no consensus among provinces or nationally on how best to support caregivers.

Research: To inform a caregivers' strategy for Ontario, Drs. Samir Sinha, provincial lead for Ontario's Seniors Care Strategy, and Geoff Anderson, of the University of Toronto, engaged researchers, policy makers, care providers and caregivers in evidence-based consultations focusing on how governments can best support caregivers. Their work led to three policy options for government, presented directly to Ontario's Minister of Health: working with businesses to ensure a workplace culture that better addresses the needs of employed caregivers; providing caregivers with the opportunity to have their voices heard and needs assessed; and implementing a caregiver benefit in Ontario for low- and moderate-income caregivers who meet specified needs tests. Drs. Sinha and Anderson believe that involving researchers and care providers in this research and "learning to speak the language of policy makers" increased the likelihood that their recommendations will guide policy makers in their efforts to support caregivers.

Sources: Sinha, S.K., *Living Longer, Living Well: Report Submitted to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister Responsible for Seniors on recommendations to Inform a Seniors Strategy for Ontario*, Chapter 9 (2012): www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/seniors_strategy/docs/seniors_strategy_report.pdf

Visit the signature initiatives web page to learn more about CIHR's health and health system research priorities: www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/43567.html.