

Summary of Research of Saima Rajabali (Supervisor: Dr. Adrian Wagg)

2017 Award Recipient of

Dr. Peter N. McCracken Legacy Scholarship

Saima's research involves examining the impact of trained peer educators on influencing change in healthy aging behaviours by community dwelling seniors. It is, therefore, aptly titled, "Supporting Healthy Aging by Peer Education and Support" (SHAPES). Her research is an innovative partnership between seniors' community organizations and clinical faculty at the University of Alberta to provide peer delivered education and support for seniors living in the community. The study is designed as a stepped-wedge, cluster randomized trial.

The study assesses the impact of trained "health coaches" on seniors' behaviours in regard to healthy aging, health literacy and health care seeking. Health coaches have been drawn from the membership of senior's centres in Edmonton and have been trained by "Expert Faculty" to deliver health education workshops and facilitate discussion groups. In addition, to the primary aims of the study, Saima will examine changes (if any) in the health literacy and health seeking behaviours of the participating seniors and the maintenance of change in uptake of these healthy aging behaviours over time. The satisfaction of seniors in receipt of the peer educator intervention with the peer education will also be assessed.

The development of the health education modules and training of 12 health coaches has been completed. Based on the feedback received from the health coaches, the health modules have been modified to include more resources, simplify the language and provide more clarification where needed. Health coaches have also been involved in recruitment efforts and identifying community resources available for the older adults. The health coaches have successfully delivered the program to 15 seniors at one seniors' activity centre and are currently delivering the program to 30 additional seniors at two seniors' centre. The last phase of the program will be delivered in the summer of 2018 after which the data will be analyzed.