Portrait of Rural Aging in Canada

Janice Keefe, Ph.D.
Director, Nova Scotia Centre on Aging
Lena Isabel Jodrey Chair in Gerontology
Professor, Department of Family Studies & Gerontology
Mount Saint Vincent University

CIHR Best Brains Exchange: Innovative approaches and pathways used to integrate home and community care with primary health care for elderly persons in rural Canada

Nov 28, 2017
Full disclose

- Rural has been the backdrop of my academic career
- From PhD – Combining work and caregiving in rural vs urban Canada (1996)
- First CIHR grant Net population loss and its impact on health (2002)
- Farm girl from PEI
- Personal and professional
Key messages

✓ Reality 1 - Rural has steadily declined
  • Provincial Differences
✓ Reality 2 - There are many rurals
  • Diversity Among Rural Communities
    • Growing old because other have left
    • Growing old because moving in
  • Rural issues affecting continuing care
✓ Reality 3 – Older Rural people are diverse
  • Diversity within rural communities

Do rural elderly people have to move to receive good care?
REALITY #1

Provinces differ in Proportion of Rural and Aging
Proportion of the population living in rural areas, has steadily declined between 1861-2011 ... although less rapidly since 1971.

Sources: Statistics Canada, censuses of population, 1851 to 2011.
Population Aging in Canada

Source: Statistics Canada Daily 2014
Change greatest in SK, ON, AB, BC.. AC high rural

Changes in the distribution of rural and urban by Province 2011 and 1951

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1951</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MB</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NB</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEI</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NL</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AC also oldest population – AB lowest proportion of 75+

Proportion of Population 75+ by province

Table 052-0005 Projected population, by projection scenario, age and sex, as of July 1, Canada, provinces and territories annual (persons x 1,000) http://www5.statcan.gc.ca/cansim/a26
Canada is Aging but some Provinces are aging faster than others – NL moves from youngest to oldest

Median Age in Canada and by Province 1975-2015

Source: Stats Canada, 2015
Percent of rural – 1951-2011

Source: Statistics Canada
Aging by Select NS Rural areas and Halifax

- Kentville 22%
- Annapolis Royal 46%
- Cape Breton County 23%
- Guysborough County 31%
- Mahone Bay 37.5%
- New Glasgow 24%
- Halifax 16%
Aging by area within NL 2021

Created by the Dept. of Health and Community Services based on a map and information provided by the Dept. of Finance.
REALITY #2

There are many rurals
From the national perspective of rural communities across Canada
Competing assumptions about living in Rural Canada

- Rural communities are isolated and lack formal services (bypassed)
- Rural communities are warm and friendly places to live (bucolic)
Characteristics that differentiate community supportiveness

- Population size
- Proportion of long term residents
- Proportion of seniors
Community characteristics

Physical locality
- Size of the population
- Distance from an urban centre
- Resources for continuing care services
- Climate Change

Social aspects
- Seniors
- Female
- Household income
- Part-time/part-year employment
- Long-term residents
Seniors’ perspectives of their own rural communities

“Older”,

“Supportive”

“Established with long standing residents”

“Small enough that everybody knows each other”

“Close to all services I need”

REALITY #3

Older people within rural communities are diverse
From the local perspective of key players in three diverse rural communities
Senior Case Studies – What we learned

Seniors are diverse

Different groups of seniors have different sets of needs

Seniors’ ability to fulfill their needs depends on physical, social, and economic resources as well as access to information
Typology of older people in Rural Communities

ACTIVE
- Backbone of the community
- Leaders of municipal gov’t, service orgs Churches, etc
- Long standing members

And they put on suppers, again, that’s the seniors. So they really contribute greatly to the community as well as being helped themselves. They’re out there doing their bit too and they help greatly in the community. (Community active senior)
Typology of older people in Rural Communities

Stoic
- Proud, private and often isolated
- independent

They want to continue living on the farm until they can no longer manage because it’s home, there’s privacy, and we’re used to it.

Vulnerable and Frail
- Limited resources
  - e.g. money, social support, services
- disconnected, may be struggling
  - health issues isolated and needing support

I am so comfortable here, really...And where would I go? To [city]? I don’t know anybody there and I couldn’t afford it
When I was a boy we only bathed once a week and seven of us used the same water!

Hey, don't give the government any ideas!
Types of Seniors in rural communities
Frail Seniors....

- Isolated
- Needing support
- Health issues

See now people got to know that I, that my eyes are bad and they’ll see me walking along, and they’ll come along... Give me a hand across the street, or anything like that. It’s just, it’s just like a big family. (22B_SR_tr Frail senior)
Program implications

How can programs be responsive to diversity of:

- older people,
- in needs and supports and
- rural communities?
Do rural older people have to move to get good care?

*Challenges & opportunities*
Care in rural communities

"My sister in the city has three doctors, a chiropodist, a physiotherapist, a home care worker and meals on wheels. Out here, all I've got is a can opener and a box of band-aids."
CHALLENGES:

Continued out-migration affecting economic well-being
  - immigration and millennials as new frontiers
Attracting/retaining Human Resources
  - family/friend caregivers
  - health professionals

Innovative ideas to overcome these and many other challenges
OPPORTUNITIES: Models of Integrated Care for Rural Older People

Flexibility
Integration across home care, nursing home and acute care; primary health etc

Focus on Caregivers
- innovative policies to support care in rural areas

Access to health services
- Transportation and Housing
- Improved technology and access... Telehealth
- Expanding scope of practice among health professionals
RURAL AGING

QUESTIONS ??
References


*To Be continued*
Climate Change will have impact on Rural Vulnerable Populations

Rising sea levels and more frequent, more intense storms

Coastal flooding impact on important infrastructure

Climate change adaptation planning needs to consider the geographical placement of care environments