

October 15, 2007 Symposium
~ Supportive Housing:
Supportive People and Sustaining the Health Care System ~

Poster Abstracts

Organization: Institute for Life Course and Aging, University of Toronto

Poster Title: In from the streets

Abstract:

Creative Participatory Dissemination: An innovative research poster for the project "In from the streets": The health and well-being of formerly homeless older adults"

Participatory action research incorporates the knowledge and skill of research participants and is becoming a benchmark for ethical research practice, particularly research conducted with marginalized groups. A central principle of the methodology is empowering and engaging research participants in the research process. Inclusion of participants offers substantial benefits including: animating the research and expanding consumption beyond academic circles to civil society and state, grounding the research and dissemination in 'lived experience' and building participant capacity for sustained community action.

During the course of the research project 'In from the streets," a study investigating the experiences of formerly homeless older adults, participants had repeatedly indicated a desire to engage in dissemination activities. Supplementary funding was secured for participant led creative dissemination activities. The blended strategy combined knowledge transfer through creative mediums in academic, state, community and institutional settings. The participant group constructed a research poster, incorporating the most relevant findings, using paint and collage. Wherever possible, participants have presented the poster and added 'first person' accounts to animate the findings.

A combination of working and training sessions supported the construction and scaling of the research poster. A Speakers' Bureau model was employed and peer consultants engaged to ensure that participants had the skill and confidence to present the poster and discuss the findings with a variety of target audiences.

The research poster was then scaled to postcards, small posters and stickers. An outreach campaign to the community, coordinated and conducted by the participant working group, raised awareness of the research findings and recommendations. The signed postcards were then delivered by mail and later in-person to relevant policy makers.