



**CLSA** Canadian  
Longitudinal  
Study on Aging  
**ELCV** Étude Longitudinale  
Canadienne sur le  
Vieillessement

## NEWSLETTER FROM THE CLSA PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

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Dear Colleagues:

The summer 2007 inaugural issue of this newsletter received much positive feedback. We thank CLSA researchers and associates who took the time to provide input and advice.

Since the summer 2007 newsletter, the CLSA team has intensified its activities to further refine and focus the different aspects of the CLSA protocol as well as to further refine and validate the measurement tools to be used in the Comprehensive Study.

In particular, the work of four theme working groups (Clinical, Health and Lifestyle, Psychology and Social, with membership from universities across Canada) in developing the Study questionnaire contents and related research deliverables is moving quickly towards completion.

At the same time, we are pleased to report on our critical groundwork with Statistics Canada for the Canadian Community Health Survey launch in June 2008. The CLSA plans to use participants in that Survey as part of the inception cohort for the CLSA itself in October 2008.

Our sincere thanks go to the theme working group leaders and members for their ongoing commitment to the CLSA, and to our partners in Statistics Canada, for having made these significant achievements possible. The foundation for the CLSA field trial (to be held in spring 2008) and the CLSA Comprehensive itself are now being solidified. We look forward to

updating you on these further developments in our winter 2008 newsletter.

Updates

### ***CLSA and Statistics Canada Collaboration***

Statistics Canada is conducting a Pilot of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) Cycle 4.2 between November 5 and December 7, 2007. The Pilot is limited to 1,000 Canadians aged 45 and over, recruited by Statistics Canada from four regions: Halifax health region; Montréal Census Metropolitan Area; Toronto (Toronto, Peel, Halton and Hamilton health regions); Winnipeg Census Metropolitan Area.

As part of the Pilot, Statistics Canada, at the request of the CLSA, will be asking participants to give written consent for the release to the CLSA of their contact information and survey responses.

For those who consent, CLSA follow-up will involve a "tracking" questionnaire that builds on the CCHS questionnaire. This will serve as a bridge to the proposed CLSA launch in October 2008 by investigating a broader set of questions on the changing medical, psychological, social and lifestyle aspects of participants' lives.

Our sincere appreciation also goes to all our CLSA colleagues who have committed their time and expertise to provide advice to Statistics Canada in the development of the CCHS Pilot questionnaire, and who are now finalizing their contributions to the questionnaire that will serve

the CLSA in its CCHS Pilot and CCHS follow-up activity.

### **Activities of Theme Working Groups in preparation for the Comprehensive CLSA**

- **The Clinical Theme Working Group**, led by *Dr. Christopher Patterson* (McMaster University and Hamilton Health Sciences) is currently finalizing the clinical protocol and disease diagnosis ascertainment algorithms for the 21 chronic diseases to be covered in the CLSA Comprehensive. The Working Group met in Toronto on August 16 2007 to refine the algorithms, for completion in November 2007. "This is an exciting phase in the development of the CLSA," commented Dr. Patterson. "On the clinical health front, we have now selected and are working to finalize ascertainment algorithms that will assist the CLSA in gaining a better understanding of the complex interplay among the disease, disability and psychosocial processes that accompany aging".
- **The Psychology Theme Working Group**, led by *Dr. Holly Tuokko* (University of Victoria) has now finalized the psychology mini-protocol for the CLSA Comprehensive, and has also completed the proposed psychological measures in the following domains: cognition, mood, life satisfaction, coping and psychopathology. Ongoing tasks involve the validation of a "coping" measure in collaboration with the CLSA Social Theme Working Group, with the financial support of the British Columbia Network on Aging Research (part of the Michael Smith Foundation). Other investigations to improve instrument selection for CLSA include determining the appropriate CES-D short form for administration and establishing measurement equivalence of selected neuropsychological tasks for English and French participants. "The CLSA provides a unique opportunity to examine a variety of psychological constructs such as antecedents or mediators/moderators of specific and global aspects of health and health-related outcomes (including mental health outcomes)", said Dr. Tuokko. "The longitudinal, multi-faceted design of the CLSA will provide the opportunity to focus on changes over time in specific psychological functions (e.g., cognition, social cognitive processes) as well as on the various interactions among psychological, social, biological and adaptive functions".
- **The Social Theme Working Group**, under the leadership of *Dr. Margaret Penning* (University of Victoria), is now finalizing its protocol and measures for the full CLSA, and it is expected that these instruments will be ready in early December 2007. "The most valuable contribution of the CLSA under this theme", observed Dr. Penning, "will be enhancement of national capacity, in a long term perspective, to observe and document key transitions in social networks and social support, and to relate these to life course trajectories in other social domains and well as to psychological and physical health".
- **The Health and Lifestyle Theme Working Group**, led by *Dr. H  l  ne Payette* (Universit   de Sherbrooke) is also well advanced in its work on the following deliverables: validation of elder nutrition screening; analysis of the links and congruence between observed measures (performance-based test) and declared measures (self-reported) with respect to capacities and functional limitations; finalization of validation of measures in relation to other variables such as mobility and physical activity; and validation of a short Food-Frequency Questionnaire for assessment of key health-related foods and nutrients, such as fruits and vegetables, whole grain products, fat, vitamin D and calcium. Dr. Payette emphasized that "research on nutrition and lifestyle interventions among the elderly is at the core of CLSA plans for the Comprehensive study to be launched in October 2008. The findings of the working group's work to date confirm the need for longitudinal studies in order to better understand the aging process as regulated by modifiable factors such as lifestyle and nutrition and to facilitate the development of targeted strategies for preventing disability and promoting successful aging".

The list of the members of each of the Theme Working Groups is available on the CLSA website: [www.clsa-elcv.ca](http://www.clsa-elcv.ca)

### ***Development of Standard Operating Procedures and Training Manuals for the CLSA Comprehensive***

Key to the revision and updating of the CLSA Protocol is the development of a full set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Training Manuals finalized in time for the launch of the CLSA Comprehensive in October 2008. Work has been initiated by CLSA senior research associate staff on the SOPs, for completion by mid-December 2007, in readiness for a CLSA Field Trial in spring 2008.

Concurrently, training manuals are being developed in the following areas:

- For Interviewers for the Tracking and Comprehensive cohort questionnaires
- For Nurse/Phlebotomist and Physical Measures Specialist, Receptionist and Volunteers;
- For Technicians (procedures for handling and storage of biological samples);
- For Data Managers (data entry and management, including manual for coding of non CAPI/CATI questions or tests).

### ***Upcoming CLSA Funding Opportunities***

The CLSA Principal Investigators are exploring a wide variety of funding opportunities, including CIHR, health charities, and provincial government agencies. The investigators are in the midst of organizing a re-submission of the national CLSA-CFI (Canadian Foundation for Innovation) application to CFI (expected deadline to be fall 2008).

### ***Watch for information on the CLSA Field Trial in early 2008***

The CLSA Principal Investigators are currently developing plans for a Field Trial in the spring and summer of 2008 regarding both the CCHS Pilot mentioned above and the CLSA Comprehensive. Details on this Field Trial will be available in our Winter 2008 newsletter.

### ***CLSA Staffing News***

We are pleased to welcome *Dr. Mark Oremus* as the new National Program Manager for the CLSA, replacing Tim Douglas who has accepted a new appointment as senior manager of Global Experience Ontario in the Ontario Government.

Mark began his tenure at the McMaster University Evidence-based Practice Centre (MU-EPC) in July 2005. He served as task order officer and co-principal investigator on systematic reviews of heparin to treat burn injury and the use of mycophenolic acid to monitor solid organ transplants. In summer 2007, Mark was appointed co-associate director of the MU-EPC and as an assistant professor (part-time) in the Department of Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics (CE&B), McMaster University. Mark's research interests include aging, dementia, care-giving, health economics, and public policy and health. He teaches epidemiology and population health at McMaster. Mark was recently awarded a Career Scientist Award by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and holds the inaugural Bernie O'Brien Fellowship in CE&B at McMaster.

Best wishes,

**Parminder Raina**  
McMaster University

**Susan Kirkland**  
Dalhousie University

**Christina Wolfson**  
McGill University

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