

# CLSA Connection



Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging  
Etude longitudinale canadienne sur le vieillissement

Transforming Everyday Life  
Into Extraordinary Ideas!

Transformer la vie quotidienne  
en idées extraordinaires!



NO. 6

FALL 2012

Canada is experiencing an unprecedented demographic change. The latest Statistics Canada data suggest that in 2011 seniors accounted for nearly 15 per cent of the population. By 2025, nearly one in five Canadians will be age 65 or older.

With the proportion of seniors growing rapidly, the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) is timely. The CLSA will explore how we age, why we age differently and how we can best cope with the changes that accompany the aging process.

From the outset and over the next 20 years, results generated from the CLSA will lead to better programs, policies and services for an aging population.

As you will read here, the CLSA has now been launched across the country. Recruitment and baseline data collection are fully underway. Since the beginning of 2012, 10 Data Collection Sites have opened and are welcoming participants. In total, more than 13,000 people have joined the study.

All of these achievements would not have been possible without a dedicated team of researchers, collaborators and staff. We are also thankful for the support of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Canada Foundation for Innovation, as well as our provincial funders and affiliated universities and research institutes.

We have come a long way in implementing Canada's largest study of the aging process, but there is still much work to be done. We looked forward to updating you on our progress as the study continues to gain momentum.



Minister of State for Seniors Alice Wong (second from left) celebrated the official grand opening and launch of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging with principal investigators Dr. Susan Kirkland (left), Dr. Christina Wolfson (second from right) and Dr. Parminder Raina (right) in September.

Dr. Parminder Raina  
McMaster University

Dr. Christina Wolfson  
McGill University

Dr. Susan Kirkland  
Dalhousie University

## Recruitment

The first wave of recruitment and data collection is ongoing for both CLSA cohorts using a multi-strategy approach. Participants for the Tracking (telephone interview) cohort are being recruited through the Statistics Canada Canadian Community Health Survey – Healthy Aging, mail outs through provincial ministries of health, and random digit dialing. Participants for the Comprehensive (home interview and Data Collection Site visit) cohort are being recruited through a combination of mail outs from provincial ministries of health and random digit dialing.

At the time of this newsletter, the CLSA has recruited more than **13,000 participants**.

Approximately **11,000 baseline telephone interviews** have been completed for the Tracking cohort and close to **1,600 completed Data Collection Site visits** for the Comprehensive cohort.

To date, the CLSA has an additional **30,000 “pre-recruits”** who have given their consent to be contacted to participate in the study.

## CLSA Comprehensive

The CLSA celebrated a major milestone this summer with the opening of 10 Data Collection Sites (DCS) across the country. Setup and training are now complete. The sites in St. John's, Halifax, Sherbrooke, Montreal, Ottawa, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Calgary, Surrey and Victoria are now welcoming participants. The Data Collection Site at the University of British Columbia will launch in 2013.

The DCS is the hub of data collection for the Comprehensive cohort. Participants move from station to station within each site to undergo interviews, neuropsychological assessments, vision and hearing tests and other physical assessments, including a DXA scan to assess bone density. Participants are also asked to provide blood and urine samples. A DCS visit lasts approximately 2 ½ hours and takes place following the completion of an in-home interview.

## CLSA Tracking

All four of the CLSA Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) centres have been functional since 2010. The centres, located in Victoria, Halifax, Sherbrooke and Winnipeg, are responsible for conducting 60-minute telephone interviews with the 20,000 Tracking participants.

CATI sites are managed locally by site supervisors and oversight is provided by the CATI coordinator and research team at the National Coordinating Centre (NCC) at McMaster University. Dr. Susan Kirkland provides scientific oversight as CATI principal investigator.

This spring, Rob Yallup was named acting CATI coordinator, replacing Kimberley MacDougald, who is on maternity leave.

## CLSA Enabling Units

The setup of the CLSA [Biorepository and Bioanalysis Centre \(BBC\)](#) is ongoing at McMaster Innovation Park (MIP) in Hamilton under the leadership of Dr. Cynthia Balion, BBC director. The centre will be the principal location for storage and analysis of the biological samples collected at each of the Data Collection Sites.

Portable nitrogen containers, called cryoshippers, are used by each of the sites to transport biological samples for long-term storage at the BBC. The data associated with the

samples will be tracked and maintained by the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS). This spring, Lori Dewar was appointed as Biorepository and Bioanalysis Centre coordinator.

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The [Statistical Analysis Centre \(SAC\)](#), housed at the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre, is the analytic nexus of the CLSA. The centre will be providing secure data storage, data management and will be collaborating with CLSA researchers and other users of the CLSA research platform.

Development and implementation of the SAC is now proceeding under the leadership of Dr. Christina Wolfson, SAC director. In April, Jennifer Uniat was appointed as SAC manager. In this role, she will work with Dr. Wolfson on the development, implementation and ongoing management of the SAC.

The SAC is currently working in collaboration with the Information Technology and Telecommunications Division of the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre and the NCC to ensure the proper set up of equipment and software to meet the needs and security requirements for data management and dissemination.

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The [Genetic and Epigenetics Centre \(GEC\)](#) is the hub for in-depth analysis of genetic and epigenetic markers associated with aging and complex diseases. The CLSA will be one of the first long-term studies to measure the evolution of epigenetic markers in a large cohort of subjects. The Genetics and Epigenetics Centre is located at the University of British Columbia's Centre for Molecular Medicine and Therapeutics in Vancouver. The GEC site co-investigators are Dr. Michael Kobor and Dr. Michael Hayden.

## Team News



Dr. Margaret Penning has stepped down from her role as site investigator at the University of Victoria (UVic). Margaret has been involved in the CLSA since planning began in 2002. The CLSA team thanks her for her contributions and leadership in the implementation of the UVic DCS and CATI sites, as well as her work as theme leader for the CLSA Social Theme Working Group.

The CLSA team welcomes [Dr. Debra Sheets](#) and [Dr. Lynne Young](#) who are now co-lead site investigators for UVic.



Dr. Sheets is an associate professor in the School of Nursing and a board-certified gerontological nurse and nurse educator. Her research interests focus on gerontology and geriatric nursing and she has expertise in aging policy, program evaluation, family caregiving and nursing education.



Dr. Young is a professor and the associate director of graduate education at the University of Victoria (UVic) School of Nursing. Her current research focuses on women's health promotion with a focus on older women, gender and cardiovascular care, competency-based nursing education and pain care.

## In the News

Over the past few months, the CLSA has been making headlines across the country. In January, the study was [profiled](#) by media in Atlantic Canada when recruitment efforts were launched in PEI and New Brunswick. Additional [media coverage](#) followed in Manitoba, Quebec, British Columbia and Newfoundland.

In April, the Université de Sherbrooke held a [media launch](#). Dr. Susan Kirkland had an [op-ed commentary](#) published in the Chronicle Herald. Later that month, the Toronto Star ran a [feature story](#) on the CLSA which appeared on the front of the Weekend Life section.

News releases were sent out in [Alberta](#) and [Nova Scotia](#) in May, with Dr. David Hogan and Dr. Susan Kirkland featured in local and [university media](#). The official opening and [media launch](#) of the Winnipeg Data Collection Site was held June 21. Media outreach in [Ontario](#) and [Saskatchewan](#) took place in July.

This fall, the [Montreal component of the CLSA](#) was launched at the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre.

The Surrey Data Collection Site also hosted a [grand opening](#) at Simon Fraser University in October.

For the latest news and updates, please visit the [In the News](#) section on the CLSA website.

## Grand Opening and Showcase



From left: Mark Filiaggi, Associate Vice-President, Research, Dalhousie University; Stephen Collins, Associate Dean, Research, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University; Susan Kirkland and Christina Wolfson, CLSA co-principal investigators; Parminder Raina, CLSA lead principal investigator; Minister of State (Seniors) Alice Wong; Yves Joannette, scientific director, Canadian Institutes of Health Research Institute of Aging; Pierre Normand, vice-president external relations and communications, Canada Foundation for Innovation.

The CLSA hosted a [Grand Opening and Showcase](#) in September to mark the national launch of the study. The [two-day event](#), held at the McMaster Innovation Park in Hamilton, brought together nearly 50 researchers in aging, representatives of funding agencies, government and university officials, as well as strategic and scientific partners of the CLSA.

Dr. Alice Wong, Minister of State (Seniors), delivered the opening remarks at the Sept. 28 launch. She was joined by several speakers including: Dr. Yves Joannette, scientific director of the CIHR's Institute of Aging; Pierre Normand, vice-president external relations and communications, Canada Foundation for Innovation; and Dr. Stephen Collins, associate dean, research, Faculty of Health Sciences, McMaster University.

A ribbon cutting and tours of the facilities followed.

## CLSA Methods and Innovation

[Technology infrastructure](#) has been one of the most important aspects in setting up the CLSA. IT specialists at McMaster University and the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre (RI MUHC) have

developed novel software that enables secure, paperless data collection and storage. The system ensures that no data are stored locally and personal information on the participants is stored separately from the collected data to maintain privacy and security. The central data repository is housed at McMaster University. The Statistical Analysis Centre in Montreal accesses data through a secure online system.

The main components of the CLSA technology infrastructure include:

*Mastodon* – Software that manages interactions with participants and securely stores identifying information including consent status and contact information.

*Sabretooth & Limesurvey* – This Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) software manages participant data collection, interview scheduling and tracks the status of the interviews through to completion.

*Beartooth & Onyx* – This Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) software is used by the Data Collection Sites to coordinate the collection of questionnaire responses, physical measurements and biospecimens from participants.

*Opal* – This Central Data Repository – or databank – securely stores and manages all non-identifying data collected using Sabretooth, Beartooth and Onyx.

## CLSA at CAG2012

The Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG) held its 41st Annual Scientific and Education Meeting in Vancouver from October 18-20, 2012.

As part of CAG2012, the CLSA hosted a [symposium](#), “A Platform for Research to Study Aging in a Changing World.”

## CLSA at GSA2012

The Gerontological Society of America will be hosting its 65<sup>th</sup> [Annual Scientific Meeting](#) in San Diego, Calif., from Nov. 14-18, 2012. This year, the CLSA will be hosting a [symposium](#), “Building a Platform for Research: The

Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging,” on November 15 from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

At the GSA, CLSA researchers will provide an update on the progress of the study, milestones achieved to date and key methodological aspects of recruitment and sampling.

## Recent Publications

Dr. Cynthia Balion recently published an article, [Vitamin D, cognition, and dementia: A systematic review and meta-analysis](#), in the journal *Neurology*. The study [found](#) a link between low vitamin D levels and Alzheimer’s disease.

## Data Access

One of the underlying principles of the CLSA is that the data be made available to the research community as soon as it is feasible while protecting privacy and confidentiality of participants. The CLSA [Data Access Policy and the Data Request Form](#) are now available on the CLSA website under the researchers section. To access the researchers section, please [register](#).

## Share your News

Do you have research or career news that you would like to share with the CLSA? Please contact [Laura Thompson](#), CLSA communications officer.

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