Today’s presentation:

i. Aging-in-place with pets

ii. CLSA analysis of social participation & pets

iii. Implications for promoting age-friendly cities
AGING-IN-PLACE WITH PETS

NATIONAL POST

CANADA

‘I’m not getting rid of my kitty’: Calgary senior chooses homelessness over giving up kitten

Emma McIntosh, Postmedia News | August 5, 2015 11:36 AM ET

More from Postmedia News
Non-causal association between pet ownership and health

Common factor

Pet ownership ➔ Health

Indirect effect of pet ownership

Pet ownership ➔ Contact with people ➔ Health

Direct effect of pet ownership

Pet ownership ➔ Health

Over 1/3 of older Canadians (≥ 65yr) report living with a household pet that offers companionship.

What does current research tell us about pets and aging-in-place?
Evidence suggests that for older adults, relationships with pets may:

- contribute to maintaining **physical function**;
- provide **companionship** and **purpose**; and
- facilitate **social interactions** and lead to a heightened **sense of community**
Yet, some contradictory, counter-intuitive findings exist:

Older adults with pets may be **lonelier**, or less satisfied with life, or show various other indications of poorer mental health...

...**BUT** may also be buffered from the negative consequences of loneliness and having lower levels of social support.
ATTACHMENT to pets has been explored as a key to understanding efficacy of pets in relation to “healthy” or “successful” aging...

... in fact, some older adults credit their pets with contributing to their own successful aging
CRITIQUES of pets for older adults have included concern with “extreme” attachment, to the detriment of participating in social life and neglecting self-care.
Few studies seek to understand pets in relation to ways that we actively promote aging-in-place.
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Exploring a contemporary phenomenon: in depth and in context (Yin 2009)

National Data
(aging, pets, and social participation)

Perspectives of Community Organizations
(senior social support and animal welfare)

Experiences of Community-Dwelling Older Adults
(with pets)
OBJECTIVE I: To describe the baseline characteristics of older Canadian pet-owners and non-owners (≥65 yr) participating in the CLSA (Tracking cohort)

OBJECTIVE II: To explore measures of social participation and life satisfaction for older Canadian adults, considering whether and how these differ for pet-owners vs. non-owners
- **CLSA Telephone Tracking cohort (Release 3.0)**
  - Community-dwelling adults residing in Canada
  - 65 yr or older at baseline (N=8,845)
  - Data collected Sept 2011 - May 2014
  - Representative sampling
Social Participation (SPA)

(i) Frequent participation in various types of social, recreational, and group activities over the past 12 months (as per Gilmour, 2012)

(ii) Wanted to participate in more social activities over the past 12 months

(iii) Barriers to social participation identified by participants and coded by CLSA personnel
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SLS): level of agreement with the following statements:

- *In many ways my life is close to ideal*;
- *The conditions of my life are excellent*;
- *I am satisfied with my life*;
- *So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life*;
- *If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.*
Assessing pet ownership:

*Do you have a household pet that provides you with companionship?*
METHODS – ANALYSIS

- **OBJECTIVE I:** weighted proportions stratified by pet-ownership; F-tests

- **OBJECTIVE II:** logistic regression models comparing pet-owners and non-owners in terms of:
  - life satisfaction
  - levels of social participation (current vs. desired)
  - barriers to social participation
  - associations between social participation and life satisfaction

*All models were controlled for socio-demographic variables and probability weighting*
Compared to non-owners, older pet-owners are less likely to:

- be older (≥ 75 yr)***
- belong to a visible minority***
- live alone***
- rent their homes***
- have completed post-secondary education*

n=7,474 respondents ≥ 65 yr, after removing observations with missing data
* p < 0.05, *** p < 0.001
In terms of considering **vulnerability and diversity** within the aging population, pet-ownership was reported by:

- 25% of respondents 75 yr and older***
- 29% of respondents living alone***
- 23% of respondents identifying as visible minority***
- 46% of respondents who identified as LGBTQ
- 31% of lower income respondents (<$20K/yr)
- 32% of respondents reporting poor to fair health

\[ n=7,474 \text{ after removing observations with missing data} \]

*** p < 0.001
FINDINGS – Life Satisfaction

- Pet-owners as a whole tend to indicate lower levels of life satisfaction

\[
\text{OR} = 0.72, \ 95\% \ CI \ [0.64, \ 0.83]^{***}
\]
As a whole, pet-owners were less likely to be frequent participators in one or more social, recreational, or group activities than non-owners

OR=0.68, 95% CI [0.57, 0.81]***

Pet-owners and non-owners were equally likely to have wanted to be more socially active over past year

OR=1.06, 95% CI [0.95, 1.19]
The **most socially-active** pet-owners (i.e., frequent participation in 5 or more social activities) had **higher life satisfaction** than similarly active non-owners.

\[
\text{OR}_{(\text{pet-owners})} = 2.97, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.99, 4.42]^{***}
\]
\[
\text{OR}_{(\text{non-owners})} = 2.38, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.74, 3.26]^{***}
\]
## FINDINGS – Barriers to social participation

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<th>WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework</th>
<th>CLSA Barriers</th>
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| Accessible opportunities          | Afraid, concerned for safety  
Location not accessible  
Location too far away  
Transportation  
Timing  
Did not want to go alone         |
| Affordable opportunities          | Cost                                                                         |
| Appropriate range of events and activities | Activities not available nearby  
Health condition/limitation  
Timing  
Too busy  
Did not want to go alone       |
| Awareness of opportunities        | Language-related reasons                                                    |
| Encouraging social participation  | Location too far away  
Activities not available nearby  
Health condition/limitation  
Did not want to go alone  
Personal or family responsibilities  
Language-related reasons  |
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Interests in pets may **transcend socio-cultural and socio-economic differences**, as well as promote opportunities for inter-generational interactions.
Costs and responsibilities of pet-care may be prioritized over dedicating time or spending money on social activities.
Offering more opportunities that align with interests in pets may also involve rethinking ways that public spaces might become more pet-friendly.

Important to balance needs of all older adults – currently, pet-owners’ interests tend to be missing from organized efforts to promote age-friendliness.
**Strengths:**

*Social-ecological approach*
*Conceptual link with age-friendly cities framework*

**Limitations:**

*Species distinctions*
*Other indicators of social well-being (e.g., Newall/Menec cluster analysis presented in previous CLSA Webinar)*
*Cross-sectional design*
*Measures themselves*...
Dog-walking: promotes physical activity, but also sense of community for older adults...may not be captured by social participation as currently measured.

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Dog-walking and sense of community in neighborhoods: Implications for promoting regular physical activity in adults 50 years and older

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Growing recognition that we as researchers are “missing” something important when we fail to pay attention to roles pets play in people’s lives.

On interviewing people with pets: reflections from qualitative research on people with long-term conditions

Sara Ryan and Sue Ziebland

“Pets were often presented as important family members, yet the researchers’ responses to the presence or talk about pets was often markedly different from their reactions to other household members.”
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More from Postmedia News
i. Many older adults have pets, including members of diverse and vulnerable sub-populations

ii. Having a pet is associated with both lower life satisfaction and lower levels of social participation for older adults

YET ...
iii. Having a pet may also help to offset some of the negative outcomes of being socially-isolated

iv. Pet-owners with higher levels of social participation also have highest life satisfaction

v. Efforts to promote social participation that also consider pet-owners’ needs and interests may contribute to the age-friendly priority of enhancing social participation
i. Drs Jennifer Hewson, Daniel Dutton, Cindy Adams, and Melanie Rock for substantive contributions and mentorship

ii. Drs James Gillett, David Hogan, Parminder Raina, and Debbie Stoewen for conceptual input

iii. The Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging

iv. All of my case study research participants


