CLSA Approved Project

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Project Title
Polypharmacy and high-risk medication use in older adults who are lonely, socially isolated and lack social support

Project Summary
Loneliness, social isolation and low social support can contribute to the development of new or worsening physical and psychological symptoms in older adults, such as insomnia, anxiety, depression and pain. These symptoms may lead to a higher likelihood of older adults being prescribed potentially harmful medications where the risks of adverse events often outweigh the potential benefits. This study will use data from the Canadian Longitudinal Study of Aging to examine how poor social health changes the risk of exposure to polypharmacy (use of multiple medications), high-risk medications and their potential drug-related harms. Understanding the relationship between social health and medication use may highlight opportunities for social prescription interventions that may be more effective to address the physical and psychological symptoms of poor social health. It may also help to identify new strategies to reduce polypharmacy and deprescribing of high-risk medications.

Keywords
Social isolation; loneliness; social heath; polypharmacy; medications