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Project Title

Getting by with a little help from their friends: the role of support and care networks in moderating health inequalities among lesbian, gay, and bisexual older Canadians

Project Summary

Canada's community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals is aging. The intersection of age and gender identity/sexual orientation is an important consideration given the potential for layering of ageism with discrimination. Multiple layers of stigma can act as barriers to participating in society, employment and volunteer opportunities, accessing services, and receiving appropriate healthcare. Research from outside of Canada has reported disparities in health between older LGBT individuals and their non-LGBT peers, including less access to healthcare and the negative effects of stigmatization on physical and mental health. Evidence points to a critical role of social networks and, more specifically, support and care networks, among LGBT older adults. Among majority populations, a relationship has been shown between these networks and health outcomes. This project will generate a portrait of health inequalities of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) older adults in Canada as well as describe the care and support networks of this group. It is hypothesized that 1) older LGB individuals will exhibit poor self-rated health and poor mental health relative to non-LGB peers; 2) care relationships among LGB individuals will be composed of non-biological family members; and 3) indicators of social support will moderate the effect of LGB identity on health outcomes such that participants with greater social capital will exhibit fewer health inequalities.

Keywords

Health inequalities, Social support, Aging, LGBT, Social networks