

Research Team Leads



Mary Lou Kelley, MSW, PhD, is a Professor at Lakehead University and a Professor at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, Thunder Bay, ON. Her work focuses on promoting interdisciplinary research and education in gerontology and palliative care for health care professionals especially those working in rural, remote areas. Mary Lou's research and publications focus on health and social services for older adults, rural health, long-term care policy and delivery, palliative care, and interdisciplinary gerontology education. She was the founding Director of the Centre for Education and Research on Aging and Health (CERAH) from 1992-1995 and was again Director from 2006-2009. From 1992-2009 Mary Lou managed the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care palliative care education initiatives for both interdisciplinary community providers and physicians in Northwestern Ontario. She is co-chair of the End-of-Life Care Steering Committee for LHIN #14. Mary Lou is principal investigator of the CURA project.



Sharon Kaasalainen is an Assistant Professor with the School of Nursing at McMaster University. She completed her Masters of Science at the University of Toronto, her PhD in Clinical Health Sciences (Nursing) at McMaster University, and a Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) postdoctoral fellowship, which focused on the role of the nurse practitioner around pain management specifically in long-term care (LTC). Sharon's research activities have focused on different aspects of gerontology, including program evaluations, caregiver support initiatives, dementia care, medication management, evidence-based practice, and pain management in LTC. In 2008, Sharon received an Ontario Career Scientist award from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Sharon is leading the CURA project in southern Ontario.

CERAH Research Project Staff



Sonja Habjan, HBSW, MA (Sociology with Specialization in Gerontology), is a Research Associate at the Centre for Education and Research on Aging and Health (CERAH), Lakehead University and is the Project Coordinator for the QPC-LTC project. Since 2001, she has also been a contract lecturer in the Gerontology Program at Lakehead University. Sonja has experience in education, research, program evaluation and community development. Her research and publications focus on palliative care in long-term care and community, interprofessional education, senior-friendly acute care, and substance misuse among the aged. Sonja is a member of the North West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) Seniors' Services Advisory Team, Northwestern Ontario End-of-Life Care Network Education and Research Standing Committees, and sits on the Board of Directors of Hospice Northwest.



Alesha Gaudet completed her Bachelor of Social Work at Saint Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick in 2006. She was the first social worker hired to work in long term care in Medicine Hat, Alberta. Understanding the importance of providing end-of-life care, Alesha developed the home's palliative care team. Alesha's passion for working for older adults brought her to Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario to complete her Master's of Social Work with a Specialization in Gerontology. Her research project focuses on interprofessional collaboration in rural palliative care teams. Currently, she is working at the Centre for Education and Research on Aging and Health (CERAH) as a Research Assistant for the QPC-LTC project.



Jessica McNulty is a graduate student trainee on the QPC-LTC project. She received an HBSW and BA (Gerontology) from Lakehead University, and is now beginning her MSW with a Specialization in Gerontology. Jessica has an interest in palliative care. She was the Lakehead University Student Representative for the Canadian Association on Gerontology, an executive member of the Gerontology Club and volunteered regularly at several of Thunder Bay's LTC facilities. Jessica previously worked for a local retirement home.