

# Healthy Balance Research Program

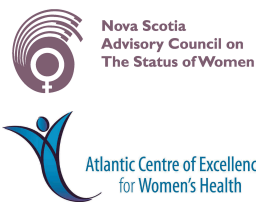
## “Building Research Capacity in Unpaid Caregiving and Women's Health”

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### Background

Throughout their adult lives, women are more likely than men to experience stress and overwork as a result of their multiple care and paid work responsibilities. There is uncertainty, however, about possible health benefits to women in the paid workforce. We are only beginning to understand the extent and nature of women's unpaid caregiving work and its stress and health impacts, whether this caregiving is done on its own or combined with paid work. The relationships among the key variables have not been fully or systematically examined for their health impacts.

### Research Objectives

#### **Knowledge generation**

To examine the relationship among unpaid caregiving work (performed on its own or in combination with paid work), empowerment and health status. The research will improve our understanding of the social values and expectations towards caregiving, ways in which caregiving is now organized, how that affects women's sense of empowerment in their lives and, in turn, how that affects their health and well-being.

#### **Knowledge exchange and uptake**

To foster uptake of new ideas and practices in policies; to promote innovation in programs and health service delivery that reflects new insights into the values and expectations we bring to caregiving and paid work

#### **Strengthening research capacity in Atlantic Canada**

To provide team leadership opportunities for established Nova Scotian researchers; to provide research opportunities for a post-doctoral researcher, to support PhD and Masters students through a scholarship program; to provide learning opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students completing practicums

#### **Promoting diversity in research**

To engage members of various communities (Aboriginal, African Nova Scotian, immigrant, disability) in structuring the research and disseminating the results through regular consultation with Equity Reference Groups

### Research Components and Team Leaders

#### **Secondary Data Analysis**

Team Leader: Shelley Phipps, PhD. Department of Economics, Dalhousie University.  
*General Social Survey, Cycle 12; National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*

#### **Population Survey**

Team Leader: Janice Keefe, Ph.D. Canada Research Chair in Aging and Caregiving Policy, Department of Family Studies and Gerontology, Mount Saint Vincent University  
*telephone survey of 1500 to 2000 Nova Scotians to gather information about the extent of caregiving experiences and the nature of these experiences*

#### **Focus Groups**

Team Leader: Jacqueline Gahagan, PhD, School of Health and Human Performance, Dalhousie University  
*18 focus groups across Nova Scotia for caregivers from specified ethno-cultural groups and representing different types of caregiving*

#### **Caregiver Portraits**

Team Leader: Brenda Beagan, PhD, School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University  
*14 micro-ethnographies of caregiving households in diverse communities involving participant observation and structured interviews*

#### **Women Caregivers in the Canadian Forces**

Team Leader: Cyndi Brannen, PhD, Post-Doctoral Researcher, Healthy Balance Research Program, Dalhousie University  
*Focus groups, interviews, on-line survey of women in the Canadian Forces who have caregiving responsibilities*

### Scholarship Program

(\* thesis completed; degree granted)

**Kathleen Hemeon\***, "The experience of anticipatory grief and loss in spousal caregivers of persons with Alzheimer's disease", MA, MSVU, 2003.

**Margaret Manning\***, "The mechanics of policy change: Home care histories in three provinces, 1985-2000, MA, MSVU, 2004

**Cortleigh Vowles**, "Children's experiences of living with and caring for parents with multiple sclerosis", MSc, Dalhousie University, pending 2004.

**Christine Kennedy**, "Service utilization among adults with disabilities and seniors: Making a case for self-managed care", MA, MSVU, pending.

**Glenda Hawkins**, "Patterns and predictors of home care utilization: Analyzing changes over a five-year period, 1996-2001", MA, MSVU, pending 2005.

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