

**The Integration of Social
and Health Services for
Francophone Seniors:
a Study in
the Greater Ottawa Region**

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Research team

- Marie Drolet, School of Social Work, UOttawa, Co-researcher
- Sébastien Savard, School of Social Work, UOttawa, Principal Co-investigator
- Jacinthe Savard, School of Rehabilitation Sciences, UOttawa, Principal Co-investigator
- Lucy-Ann Kubina, Research Associate, GReFoPS
- Yves Couturier, Université de Sherbrooke, Co-researcher
- Marjorie Silverman, School of Social Work, UOttawa, Co-researcher

- Advisory Committee: Ghislain Sangwa-Lugoma (Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario), Gaëtane Gagnon (Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie), Jean-Louis Schryburt (Fédération des aînés et retraités francophones de l'Ontario), Maryse Castonguay (Hôpital Montfort)



Consortium national
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Volet Université d'Ottawa

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GReFoPS

Groupe de recherche sur la
formation professionnelle en
santé et service social en contexte
francophone minoritaire

A few words about researches by GReFoPS

- This study funded by Consortium national de formation en santé CNFS-UOttawa and ARIMA research group
- It follows:
 - Group interview sessions with 45 professionals (2011-12)
 - Research on strategies employed by 40 caregivers of seniors or children with special needs, and the channels pursued to access social and health care services, especially in the minority language (2012-14)
- Preliminary results with 50 people (2014-16)
 - And a summary of six years of research

Objectives of this research

- Create an overview of current issues:
 - outline various formal and informal integration practices within minority language clinical services in the community, in an effort to meet the needs of Francophone seniors in a linguistic minority – bilingual setting
- Identify challenges and keys to success linked to promising approaches, both formal and informal:
 - in order to highlight clinical and community practices that form part of the active offer of integrated social and health services delivered in the minority language

Methodology

- Research conducted in four types of zones in the Greater Ottawa region:
 - Urban, with heavy concentration of Francophones
 - Urban, with low concentration of Francophones
 - Rural, with heavy concentration of Francophones
 - Rural, with low concentration of Francophones
- Semi-structured interviews with managers (16)
- Discussion groups with participants (17) and seniors (17)

Results: still issues

- Significant challenges in service integration:
 - Complex and fragmented health and social system
 - Difficulties in accessing information
- Lack of inter-agency coordination
 - Institutionalized health services and community resources:
 - two realms that operate in parallel
- Although problem not specific to Francophones, it is felt with greater intensity:
 - How to reach out to Francophones when many do not self-identify?
 - Which professionals can express themselves in the minority language?
 - Which organizations offer services in the minority language?

Access, before integration

- The shortage of social and health services offered in the minority language is still a pressing problem and hampers efforts to integrate them:
 - Especially in areas where minority community not heavily represented
 - Notably with respect to availability of specialists
 - More so in terms of services offered by private companies whose services aren't covered by the Ontario *French Language Services Act* (1986)

The demand for services: another obstacle

- Many seniors or their caregivers are reluctant to ask for services delivered in the minority language:
 - “Ontario’s mostly an English province so maybe I shouldn’t...”
 - “Well, I get along not too bad in English, I’m bilingual...”
 - “When you’re sick you think of the quality of the service rather than just the language” and its timeliness
- They should ask: it’s a question of service quality and safety

Active offer – far from being a “given”

- Initial welcome from staff often spoken only in English
- Anglophone staff not fully aware of needs of Francophones:
 - “Well, they almost all speak English”... but level of fluency often insufficient to:
 - discuss in-depth health and social issues, emotions
 - convey complete picture of the situation
- Francophone staff who address Francophones in English
- Quality of French language spoken by some employees
- Documentation produced only in English
- Lack of documentation regarding whatever resources that are available to Francophones
 - referrals thereto are too rare

Facilitating factors

- Partial or total bilingual designation of organizations
- Instituting minority language as the one of work and governance
- Setting up/protecting positions classified “bilingual imperative”
- Networking and formal agreements within the minority language organizations
- Francophone or bilingual organizations with satellite points of service in community with highest Anglophone presence
- Staff member especially designated to accompany minority language people and caregivers:
 - guide them through the system towards minority language resources needed
- Informal networking among minority language employees
- Agreements for field placements for minority language students

Desired improvements

- Improve distribution of available services in minority language to optimize networking among professionals and with people
- Set up formal channels that facilitate the coordination of a full range of services in minority language :
 - Increased formal networking among minority language organizations
 - Dedicated point of service to meet needs of seniors and coordinate health and social services
 - Coordinator for health and social services between institutionalized and community-based agencies and with the community (e.g., a case manager)
- Promote bilingual service bonus for professionals and agencies

Conclusion

- Need for greater level of awareness:
 - Managers and staff, particularly Anglophones:
 - a matter of safety
 - Public: the illusion of quality of communication
- Need for formal mechanisms that lead to:
 - Identifying official minority language people within the community
 - e.g., microchip on health insurance card
 - Coordination of services offered in French