

# CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

IN FRAILTY-INFORMED CARE™



Perley Rideau

The Perley and Rideau  
Veterans' Health Centre



Centre of Excellence  
*at a Glance*





# Vision

Imagine Canada's frail seniors living healthy, independent lives for longer periods of time thanks to the support of professional caregivers trained in evidence-based best practices, and of friends and family able to access the necessary knowledge resources. This vision inspires Perley Rideau's Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™ (Centre of Excellence).

The Centre of Excellence aims to improve quality of life for frail seniors through a combination of research, and the development and dissemination of evidence-based best practices and care protocols. This work is essential to easing a crisis that threatens to overwhelm families, communities, hospitals and long-term care (LTC) homes across Canada. Our healthcare and LTC systems are ill-equipped to cope with the rapidly growing population of frail seniors.

Frailty is a state of increased vulnerability; people who are frail are less able to cope with minor stresses and more likely to suffer the types of rapid and dramatic declines in health that lead to hospital stays. Although not all seniors are frail, risk of frailty increases with age. According to the Canadian Frailty Network (CFN), about 50% of those aged 85 and older are medically frail. The population of Canadians 85 years of age and older is

growing approximately four times faster than the general population; by 2051, it will include approximately 2.7 million Canadians, or 5.7% of the national population.<sup>1</sup>

"Hallway medicine" is a polite term in common usage today that touches on a key part of the problem: our healthcare systems are not designed for frail people. Due to illness or accident, many frail seniors end up in hospital despite mounting evidence that their health tends to deteriorate while there. And hospitals are by far the most expensive place to provide care. The Centre of Excellence aims to minimize the numbers of frail seniors admitted to hospital, and to maximize their ability to lead healthy, independent and fulfilling lives.

The Centre of Excellence will lead and partner on research to identify and evaluate best practices in care, as well as in prevention strategies. This research will lead to evidence-based protocols in care and to the resources that families and friends need to support frail seniors. The Centre of Excellence is also developing the educational and training resources needed to properly train healthcare professionals to care for frail older adults. By translating actionable research into meaningful practices, the Centre of Excellence will improve the lives of older adults living with frailty for generations to come.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016004/98-200-x2016004-eng.cfm>



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## Background

To improve quality of care, the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre (Perley Rideau) has established a Centre of Excellence dedicated to research, education and evidence-based best practices. The Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™ will help to meet many of the imminent challenges facing the healthcare and long-term care sectors, while enhancing the lives of Perley Rideau residents, patients, tenants and clients.

Frailty is a state of increased vulnerability. A person who is frail is less able to cope with minor stresses and more likely to suffer rapid and dramatic changes in health. The risk of frailty increases with age, although older people are not necessarily frail. According to the Canadian Frailty Network (CFN), 50% of people 85 and older are medically frail. Current demographic trends indicate that frailty will be an increasingly important – and expensive – issue for the healthcare and long-term care sectors.

Despite this growing threat, healthcare systems across Canada are ill prepared. According to CFN: “No care setting in Canada currently identifies and assesses frailty as standard clinical practice.” In 2018, CFN and The National Institute on Ageing (NIA) published a report documenting a lack of consensus on how to measure and manage frailty. With Canada's first Research Chair in Frailty-Informed Care, the Centre of Excellence strives to fill these gaps by conducting research and by developing evidence-based best practices in care.

Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care defines a Centre of Excellence as an institution that enhances quality of care through education, research, adoption of evidence-based practice and partnerships. And while the province supports three Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care, none of them focuses on frailty.

The Perley Rideau's facilities, expertise, programs and population make it the ideal host for a Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care. One of Ontario's largest and most innovative long-term care homes, the Perley Rideau occupies a 25-acre campus adjacent to The Ottawa Hospital. Along with 450 long-term care beds, the campus also includes 139 independent-living apartments (the Seniors' Village), and delivers a growing number of clinical, therapeutic and recreational services. The Perley Rideau has earned a reputation for providing top-quality care and earned Accreditation Canada's top designation – Exemplary Status – in 2018 following a comprehensive review. Many programs and initiatives underway at the Perley Rideau support one or more of the Centre of Excellence three-part model (Research, Educate, Care).



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## Sub-Acute Unit for Frail Elderly (SAFE Unit)



In March 2018, the Perley Rideau opened a 20-bed unit to care for frail seniors recovering from acute illness. The pilot project, in partnership with The Ottawa Hospital and the Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), establishes an entirely new level of care. Under SAFE, frail seniors who are at risk of deconditioning in hospital receive medical and restorative care until they are well enough to return home. The pilot also involves training for staff, and an evaluation of program effectiveness and patient outcomes. The evaluation to date has demonstrated that the SAFE unit is effective in reducing length of stay in hospital and helping people return home.

## Integrated Personal Support Worker (PSW) Training Program



In 2017, the Perley Rideau expanded its longstanding partnership with Algonquin College by establishing a “living” classroom devoted to Algonquin’s PSW Training Program. The Program involves a variety of learning environments: classroom and laboratory, along with clinical and community settings. Students in the Program interact regularly with Perley Rideau residents, families, tenants, staff and volunteers. Some interactions are built into the formal teaching methodology, while others occur organically as a key element of student life at the Perley Rideau campus.

## Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO)



The Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO) develops and promotes the use of evidence-based best practices: interventions proven to improve health outcomes. RNAO selected the Perley Rideau through a competitive process to become a Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO). In partnership with RNAO, the Perley Rideau implements and evaluates best practices related to four aspects of long-term care. By putting the latest research into practice, reducing variation in care and eliminating interventions that have little effect, the initiative promises to further improve the quality of care.



## Interprofessional Clinic at Perley Rideau



In 2019, the Interprofessional Clinic at Perley Rideau opened at the Perley Rideau. Developed in partnership with the University of Ottawa Faculty of Health Sciences, the Clinic is an innovative ecosystem of community-based healthcare services, applied learning, continuing education and research. Clients from both the Health Centre and the community come to the Clinic for services in audiology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech language pathology. The Clinic is also a learning environment for students of University of Ottawa healthcare programs, and also offers a range of continuing-education workshops, courses and presentations for clinicians, educators, and others interested in healthcare.

## SeeMe™: Understanding frailty together



In 2019, Perley Rideau began to implement SeeMe™, a new approach to care. SeeMe™ recognizes and assesses frailty as part of a person’s overall health, and helps residents and their families to make informed decisions about treatment that may be helpful or harmful within the context of frailty. Care staff have trained in the new approach and SeeMe™ was implemented across the Health Centre in 2019. The evaluation to date has shown that SeeMe™ has been well-received by staff and families and that it helps provide more resident-centered care. Families feel it helps them express what is important to them and their loved one and also helps them make informed decisions.



By establishing a Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care, the Perley Rideau honours its longstanding commitment to research and learning, and to delivering ever-greater value to the healthcare system and the community. Through the Centre of Excellence, the Perley Rideau will seize opportunities to lead and participate in innovative initiatives that will advance frailty-informed care, research and knowledge translation in long-term care.



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## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is the Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™?

Located on the Perley Rideau campus, the Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™ (Centre of Excellence) develops and implements innovations in care, education and actionable research related to people in a state of increased vulnerability. A person who is frail is less able to cope with injury (e.g. a fall) and illness (e.g. the flu) and more likely to suffer rapid and dramatic changes in health. The risk of frailty increases with age, although older people are not necessarily frail. The Centre of Excellence aims to improve quality of life for all older adults living with frailty by identifying and implementing evidence-based best practices, as well as innovations in care and education. This work will benefit all frail individuals, regardless of where they live.

### 2. What is Frailty-Informed Care?

Frailty-informed care is healthcare that is based on a comprehensive and inclusive assessment of a person's strengths, weaknesses, values and preferences. Frailty-informed care focuses on maximizing quality of life. The healthcare system primarily aims to extend life by curing diseases, treating conditions and fixing injuries. For frail individuals, however, healthcare interventions often risk significantly diminishing quality of life. Frailty-informed care takes into account an intervention's impact on quality of life and helps frail older adults and their families make informed decisions about care and treatment.

Frailty-informed care involves an effective, ongoing partnership between a person, and their family, healthcare professionals and care providers. Together, the partners consider a person's wishes and values and determine how best to maximize their quality of life, and their ability to experience life's pleasures.

### 3. What is SeeMe™?

SeeMe™ is a comprehensive frailty-management framework used to guide the care of people living with frailty. The framework adopts a holistic, individualized approach to care that considers a person's strengths, values, preferences and desires. Perley Rideau implements SeeMe™ for all residents. The Centre of Excellence and SeeMe™ are based on a similar philosophy: to maximize quality of life even for individuals in the advanced stages of frailty. This philosophy guides the Centre of Excellence's work, its partnerships and its approach to care; it also sets the Centre of Excellence apart from other organizations.

### 4. Why is frailty a priority for Perley Rideau?

Since its inception, Perley Rideau has continually developed and implemented effective solutions to current and emerging challenges facing the healthcare and long-term care (LTC) systems. Recent examples include the designation of Specialized Veteran Beds, the innovative Sub-Acute care for Frail Elderly (SAFE) pilot project and the Specialized Behavioural Support Unit (SBSU).

Canada faces a looming crisis in the care of frail older adults. The population of Canadians 85 years of age and older is growing approximately four times faster than the general population<sup>1</sup>; by 2051, it will include approximately 2.7 million Canadians, or 5.7% of the national population. This demographic reality poses significant challenges for the healthcare and long-term care systems. According to the Canadian Frailty Network (CFN), however, "No care setting in Canada currently identifies

<sup>1</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016004/98-200-x2016004-eng.cfm>



and assesses frailty as standard clinical practice,”<sup>2</sup> although about 50% of those aged 85 and older are medically frail. Additionally, the National Institute on Ageing (NIA), in collaboration with CFN, published a report in 2018 describing the lack of consensus in the measurement and management of frailty.<sup>3</sup> Perley Rideau, a recognized leader in caring for seniors and Veterans, has the facilities, expertise, programs and population needed to address the frailty challenge.

## 5. Why is it called a Centre of Excellence?

Although no universal standards exist to define a Centre of Excellence, it generally consists of teams of highly skilled experts involved in research and education to enhance knowledge and care.<sup>4,5</sup> Ontario's Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care defines a Centre of Excellence as an institution that enhances quality of care through education, research, adoption of evidence-based practice and partnerships. And while the province supports three Centres for Learning, Research and Innovation in Long-Term Care, none of them focuses on frailty.

The Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™ provides a systematic and comprehensive approach to understanding frailty, and to developing evidence-based best practices in care and knowledge transfer. Perley Rideau will leverage its affiliation with the University of Ottawa and Algonquin College to attract the additional partners and stakeholders needed to build capacity, and ensure the effective transfer and application of knowledge. By building on Perley Rideau's unique expertise and experience, and by bringing together leading researchers, institutions, governments and other stakeholders, the Centre of Excellence will advance relevant knowledge, along with Canada's capacity to effectively care for a rapidly growing population of older adult living with frailty.

## 6. How is the Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care different from other organizations with a research focus on aging?

No other organization in Canada currently focuses on developing and implementing innovations in care, education and actionable research specific to frailty. Perley Rideau has a particular interest in frailty within a long-term care context and has a diverse range of residents, programs and services. As a result, the Centre of Excellence can target research to address the current needs of Veterans and other seniors living with frailty, to generate relevant, meaningful and actionable findings. The Centre of Excellence's research findings will be applied directly to clinical practice, improving the care of Perley Rideau residents, and will be shared with a broad range of partners and stakeholders to advance overall understanding and improve quality of care.

By moving research and teaching out of traditional academic institutions and integrating these activities into care environments, the Centre of Excellence model will help decrease the time from idea conception to application of evidence-based practice. This model will enable the Centre of Excellence to set new standards when it comes to caring for older Canadians living with frailty.

Unique aspects of the Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care™:

- Specific focus on improving care and quality of life for older adults living with frailty
- Recognition of the importance of focusing on frailty even in the advanced stages
- Conducting and facilitating applied, actionable research with direct and timely impacts on care

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Frailty Network (2019, Jan 21). Assessing frailty: how screening for frailty helps. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfn-nce.ca/frailty-matters/how-screening-for-frailty-helps/>

<sup>3</sup> National Institute on Ageing. (2018). We Can't Address What We Don't Measure Consistently: Building Consensus on Frailty in Canada. Toronto, ON: National Institute on Ageing.

<sup>4</sup> Sugarman DT. Centers of excellence. The Journal of the American Medical Association. 2013; 310(9): 994.

<sup>5</sup> Elrod JK, Fortenberry JL. Centers of excellence in healthcare institutions: what they are and how to assemble them. BMC Health Services Research 2017, 17(Suppl 1): 425.





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- Working with a broad range of stakeholders to build capacity in frailty-informed care
- Grounded in SeeMe™: Understanding *frailty* together, a framework developed at Perley Rideau, and focused on frailty assessment and management in LTC
- Creation of unique learning opportunities to shift frailty assessment and management
- Opportunity to test new models of frailty assessment and management.
- Creation of learning opportunities and skill development in frailty assessment and management

## 7. What are the Centre of Excellence's pillars and how do they connect?

The Centre of Excellence framework features three pillars: care, applied research, and knowledge translation/education/best practices. Although conceptually distinct, the pillars connect strongly in practice. For example, research priorities will be determined based on needs and problems identified in care settings. The evaluation of research findings will lead to the development of best practices and care protocols; these are shared with other stakeholders and applied in a clinical context to enhance care. The evidence acquired through research, evaluation and application will create opportunities for knowledge transfer, such as the development of curricula, training courses and guidelines focused on caring for frail older adults. This synergy will foster a culture of continual learning and research that will promote ongoing improvements in frailty-informed care.

## 8. How is the Centre of Excellence funded?

The Centre of Excellence is supported by The Perley Rideau Foundation through its generous donors. The Centre of Excellence also applies to various provincial and federal programs to fund specific projects and initiatives. To secure long-term, sustainable funding, the Centre of Excellence must demonstrate the value of its work and its impacts on frailty broadly. The Centre of Excellence will do this by leveraging partnerships and building interdisciplinary teams across multiple sectors that can work together to generate new knowledge that be translated at a national and international level.

## 9. Who are your partners?

The Centre of Excellence has a formal partnership with the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa. This partnership also includes the Interprofessional Clinic at Perley Rideau. Interprofessional Clinic at Perley Rideau activities focus on applied learning, clinical practice, care, education and research. This partnership will enhance health-service delivery and social impact.

The Centre of Excellence also benefits from Perley Rideau's unique collaboration with Algonquin College to establish the Integrated Personal Support Worker (PSW) Training Program. Students of the Program learn in a variety of settings, including a classroom integrated into a Perley Rideau residents' unit. The Program leverages Perley Rideau's unique community setting to optimize practical learning opportunities and to facilitate interactions between students, residents, staff and volunteers. This innovative model will inform the Centre of Excellence's models for education and knowledge transfer.

Ultimately, the Centre of Excellence will collaborate with various group interested in advancing frailty-related knowledge, care or education. This includes academia, researchers, governments, industry, healthcare providers, and professional bodies.

The Centre of Excellence also strives to engage directly with older adults living with frailty and their families/caregivers at various stages of innovation in order to ensure that the work conducted is relevant and meaningful to the care recipient.



**Dr. Annie Robitaille** (Right), Research Chair at the Centre of Excellence in Frailty-Informed Care  
& **Danielle ("Danny") Sinden** (Left), Director, Centre of Excellence

## Introducing Annie and Danny

In January 2020, The Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre named Dr. Annie Robitaille ("Annie"), the first Research Chair in Frailty-Informed Care for the newly established Centre of Excellence.

Dr. Robitaille ("Annie"), an Assistant Professor in the Interdisciplinary School of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa, has dedicated her career to researching a broad spectrum of issues related to the aging process. Over the past decade, Dr. Robitaille's research initiatives have ranged from the study of long-term care to responsive behaviours and social isolation of older adults living with frailty. Her breadth of experience supports the mission of the Centre of Excellence by fostering innovations in the provision of care and sharing practical research.

Danny Sinden is the Director of the Centre of Excellence and oversees its' operations, including the development and implementation of the strategy. Danny works closely with Annie and other researchers, to implement innovative and timely research that will have a meaningful impact on the lives of older adults living with frailty, both at Perley Rideau and beyond.

Danny has a Masters degree in Gerontology, along with extensive experience in research and clinical operations across a variety of geriatric programs and settings.

### Contact

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