



Learning Sessions for Alliance's Annual  
Conference  
<https://www.allianceon.org/conference2024>



## Spotlight Presentation 3-4:

# Understanding the Social Prescribing Needs and Perspectives of Seniors: Results From a Mixed-Methods Study

### Presenter:

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### Description:

This presentation focuses on the role of social prescribing in promoting the wellness of older adults in Canada, leveraging the perspectives of marginalized seniors to ensure that innovative primary and community care initiatives meet their needs.

### Session objectives and learning outcomes:

- Participants will understand the importance of social connection to the health and wellbeing of older adults.
- Participants will understand the design requirements of "social prescribing programs" as evidenced by mixed methods data among Canadian Seniors.
- Participants will be able to identify opportunities for improving care among older adults.

## **Full description:**

This research study addresses the need for holistic, person-centered healthcare among older adults. It focuses on exploring the barriers to care that this demographic faces and evaluates the role and perceptions of social prescribing. The mixed-methods approach, comprising a quantitative survey (n = 3114) and qualitative interviews (n = 43), provides comprehensive insights into older adults' healthcare needs and their views on social prescribing.

### **Methodology and Data Collection**

The study's methodology included a large-scale quantitative survey with 3,114 participants, complemented by in-depth qualitative interviews with 43 individuals. The survey aimed to gather broad data on healthcare needs, access difficulties, and perspectives on social prescribing. The qualitative interviews provided a nuanced understanding of individual experiences, expectations from healthcare providers, and perceptions of social prescribing programs.

### **Findings: Key Insights and Perspectives**

The research findings indicate a clear need for more holistic, personalized healthcare approaches for older adults.

#### **Key insights**

They include **Barriers to Care:** Older adults face diverse barriers to healthcare, necessitating tailored approaches. These barriers include both systemic issues and individual challenges. **Perceptions of Social Prescribing:** There is a general acknowledgment of the potential benefits of social prescribing. However, older adults express mixed confidence in its efficacy for their individual circumstances.

## **Concerns and Expectations**

Concerns about the scope of social prescribing and the role of healthcare professionals in non-medical needs are prevalent. There are high expectations for the competence of link workers in these programs.

## **Diverse Needs and Preferences:**

The study revealed significant variations in interest and willingness to participate in social prescribing, influenced by factors such as comfort with social connections and trust in healthcare providers.

## **Impact and Implications**

The study's findings have several implications for the development and implementation of social prescribing programs. The data highlight the importance of addressing individualized needs and ensuring that such programs are sensitive to the concerns and expectations of older adults. The insights on barriers to care and the diverse needs and preferences of older adults can inform more effective and inclusive approaches to social prescribing.

## **Relevance and Contribution**

This study contributes significantly to the understanding of social prescribing in the context of older adult healthcare. It aligns with conference themes by providing evidence-based insights into holistic, person-centered care. The research underscores the importance of equity and diversity in healthcare, offering valuable insights for future program development and policy formulation. The inclusion of a large sample size and a mixed-methods approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the topic, adding substantial value to the discourse on integrating social determinants of health in elder care.