



## Research on mistreatment of older adults in Quebec:

summaries of scientific articles



### Coming Out to Care: Caregivers of Gay and Lesbian Seniors in Canada.

---

#### REFERENCE

Brotman, S., Ryan, B., Collins, S., Chamberland, L., Cormier, R., Julien, D., Meyer, E., Peterkin, A., & Richard, B. (2007). Coming Out to Care: Caregivers of Gay and Lesbian Seniors in Canada. *The Gerontologist*, 47(4), 490-503.

#### TEXT TYPE

**Format:** Scientific article

**Content:** Empirical

#### DISCUSSED THEMES

Gay and lesbian seniors, caregivers, discrimination, homophobia, health care accessibility, organization of services, training.

#### GOAL OR RESEARCH QUESTION

This study highlights the experiences and perceptions of caregivers who support gay or lesbian seniors. These results are based on a study related to issues such as health care accessibility and equity experienced by gay and lesbian seniors in Canada.

#### PROBLEM

There is a growing interest in Canada in the phenomenon of aging regarding gay and lesbian seniors. However, policies and practices addressing issues specifically affecting this population are still scarce, particularly within the health and social services network. Moreover, little attention is given to the identification and response to the caregivers' needs who look after these seniors, often on an informal basis and unpaid. Research on caregivers of gay and lesbian seniors is currently emerging in Canada and the United States.

#### METHODOLOGY

It is a qualitative study based upon principles of grounded theory. It was performed among 17 caregivers living in three Canadian cities: Montreal, Halifax and Vancouver. Open-ended interviews were conducted with participants around four main themes: describing the role of caregivers and their relationships with older adults; past experiences related to health care accessibility by gay and lesbian seniors as well as the impact of these experiences on the relationship with the caregiver and her/his role; needs and problems faced by caregivers; and finally, future changes.

---

## RESULTS

Findings indicated several critical themes, including the impact of felt and anticipated discrimination, complex processes of coming out, the role of caregivers, self-identification as a caregiver, and support, as well as the little support they receive from organizations due to the low awareness of their needs and realities.

## DISCUSSION

The caregivers who participated in this study have addressed the issue of discrimination through the past experiences of the gay and lesbian senior, as well as the support offered to caregivers. It seems that the actual discrimination and fear of such discrimination may influence the way older people use services and also the way caregivers interact with services in order to protect the person they care for. The results show that the support received proved to be helpful to mitigate negative experiences. It is clear that children who are caring for a gay or lesbian parent may deal with a particular situation, which may also reflect discrimination. Finally, the results suggest that significant differences create a gap between the reality of caregivers of gay and lesbian seniors and other caregivers, and therefore require the adaptation of services.

## CONCLUSION

Because of the low number of research covering the reality of caregivers providing support to gay and lesbian seniors, it is suggested that further research must be undertaken on the subject in order to provide better support to gay and lesbian seniors and to their caregivers as well.

## AVENUES FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Several recommendations are made, such as the need to adapt the definition of “caregiver” so that it will be more representative of the reality of homosexual persons, develop specialized services and fight discrimination against gay and lesbian seniors. Several research avenues are also proposed: a comparative analysis of the caregivers according to the sexual orientation and the origins of seniors who are receiving care, comparison of the provision of care to gay and lesbians seniors who lived before and after sexual liberation, a comparative analysis depending on the rural context or on various social variables, etc.

## DRAFTING DATE

July 17, 2014

