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*This newsletter is intended
for people who participated
in the Research Centre on
Aging's projects*

*It is also distributed to
anyone who wants to receive
it. Please contact us for more
information (see page 4).*

Elder abuse: major changes

By Marie Beaulieu, PhD



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Quebec has the world's first research chair in elder abuse, whose work will be directed at the Research Center on Aging

You may have seen Yvon Deschamps (French-language television) and Bill Haugland (English-language television) tell viewers to "Help, Love, Act" in public-service announcements about elder abuse. Their messages reach out to say that not only does elder abuse exist in Quebec, but, more importantly, but there is help and support for victims of it.

This awareness campaign is the first of four structuring actions of the first 2010-2015 *Government Action Plan to Fight Elder Abuse*, announced in June by Marguerite Blais, Minister Responsible for Seniors. The plan has been built around collaboration between 13 government departments and agencies. In producing it, the Secrétariat aux Aînés, a provincial-government agency, appointed a team of four experts, including Marie Beaulieu

from the Research Center on Aging. Beaulieu has been given the task of validating the plan's scientific basis.

This plan proposes directions around which a series of tangible actions will be structured to foster a major shift in the way that society views the elderly. It will be backed by significant funding (\$20 million), so the actions should be adequately supported.

1-888-489-ABUS

The second of the government's four actions was the implementation in October of a new provincial elder-abuse helpline: 1-888-489-ABUS (2287). From 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., every day of the year, elderly persons can call to share their experiences or to ask for help. If they provide their consent, the information will be shared with a professional in their region so that they do not have to retell their story a number of times.

This will make it easier to organize rapid follow-up. This helpline is also available to professionals in various areas who need support in their work or who want to have an outside opinion to shed light on their practice with the elderly.

Research chair

The third structuring action will be carried out at the Research Center on Aging through the work



Announcement of the creation of the Research Chair in Elder Abuse

See ELDER ABUSE: MAJOR CHANGES on page 4...

...ELDER ABUSE: MAJOR CHANGES (continuation of page 1)

of Marie Beaulieu under a research chair in elder abuse created by the provincial government. The chair, with funding for five years, aims at proposing concrete action that can be validated scientifically. In all likelihood, this stands out as the world's first research chair dedicated to the fight against elder abuse! Beaulieu's team will focus on developing theoretical, empirical, and practical knowledge; supporting the training of highly qualified personnel; evaluating intervention strategies (prevention, screening, and case management); and supporting knowledge transfer while developing innovative research projects.

The new research chair in elder abuse will also be responsible, starting in spring 2011, for a Web site to make study findings available to the public. Seniors associations will be called on to create research partnerships to ensure that the work performed corresponds to seniors' expectations and needs.

Coordinating action

Lastly, the fourth structuring action will consist in setting up a network of 17 coordinators, 1 in each of Quebec's 17 administrative regions. Its purpose will be to forge links and foster joint action between stakeholders in the health and social-services system, the various government departments, community organizations, social-economy stakeholders, and private-sector services. In taking this action, the government recognizes each region has its own organization and even operating procedures, which must be taken into account to reduce elder abuse.

In addition to these four structuring actions, several government departments and agencies have also committed to enhancing what they already do and developing new expertise. Improvements are expected in various fields of endeavor: improving knowledge, increasing information, improving training opportunities and better equipping practitioners, and strengthening and extending actions to better combat abuse and bolster joint action. To illustrate, the provincial department of justice will head up a committee on the issue of privileged communication. They will deal with questions such as how to enable practitioners from various areas to discuss a case of abuse without jeopardizing the professional secret associated with their oaths.

Lastly, this first 2010-2015 *Government Action Plan to Fight Elder Abuse* includes a place for the elderly themselves. They will be asked to give opinions or take part in action-research projects under the research chair to propose new practices responding to their needs. All of these actions are not of importance only to the elderly among us. As the Chinese proverb would have it, "To mock your elders is to destroy the house where you have to stay tonight." ¶



Left to right: Hélène Payette, RCA director; Marie Beaulieu, researcher; Marguerite Blais, Minister Responsible for Seniors; and Luce Samoisette, Rector of the Université de Sherbrooke



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