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Introduction

Many practicing regulated and unregulated health care providers find themselves ill-prepared to meet the complex health care needs of older adults in their care. The Geriatric Certificate Program (GCP) represents a collaborative partnership leveraging existing educational courses, with new courses developed to fill existing education gaps, aimed at building capacity for the provision of high quality of care for older adults.

Geriatric Certificate Program

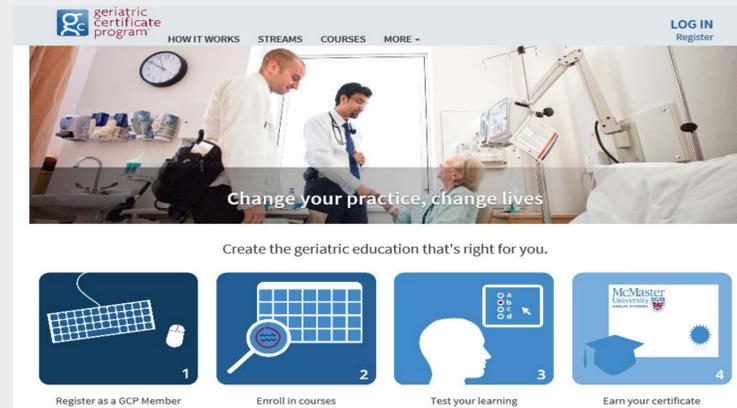
Program objectives: 1) improve confidence and competence in geriatrics; 2) add new practical skills and knowledge to participants' education portfolio; 3) equip participants with new innovative approaches; and 4) open up more career opportunities for graduates in geriatrics.

Education Streams: The program consists of two education streams to align with regulated or non-regulated health care roles. Within each stream, participants select from a range of required and elective course requirements designed to reflect the learning priorities that complement their previous education and support current practice. Completion of five required and two elective courses, with a minimum passing grade of 70% in each corresponding course quiz, is required to obtain a GCP certificate.

Program Information: Many of the courses are offered online and the majority of those delivered in-person are offered as 1-day workshops. Participants pay a program registration fee and then enroll and pay for each course separately through the education provider.

Advantages:

- This education is not available elsewhere (courses are available independently but not packaged together).
- 'One stop shopping' to access geriatric education.
- Ability to get credit for courses completed already.
- Opportunities for networking with others in the field.
- Courses taught by experts in the field.
- Linkage between research/ knowledge and practice.
- Courses are fresh, current, up-to-date.
- Flexibility for learners to determine when they take the courses - suitable for those working full-time.



Partners

- The GCP has partnered with pre-existing and well-established courses that clearly link knowledge to practice and have a track record of outstanding evaluations (Table 1).

Courses	Regulated Stream	Non-Regulated Stream
Canadian Falls Prevention Curriculum*	Elective	Elective
Care of the Elderly: Principles in Primary Care**	Elective	Not available
Cognitive Assessment Tools**	Elective	Not available
Delirium Prevention and Management*	Elective	Elective
DementiaAbility Methods: The Montessori Way™**	Required	Required
Frailty eLearning Module (online)*	Elective	Required
Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA)*	Required	Required
Geriatric Training Program**	Required	Elective
P.I.E.C.E.S.™	Required***	Not available
U-First*	Required***	Required
Update in Geriatrics**	Elective	Not available
Validation Communication Techniques*	Required	Required

*Pre-existing courses
**Courses developed for GCP
***For the Regulated stream, either the P.I.E.C.E.S.™ or U-First® course can be completed as a required course (but not both).

- GCP has collaborated with the Ontario Personal Support Worker Association (OPSWA) to provide course cost savings for its members.
- Course topics were selected based on a needs assessment conducted with key stakeholders.

Program Evaluation

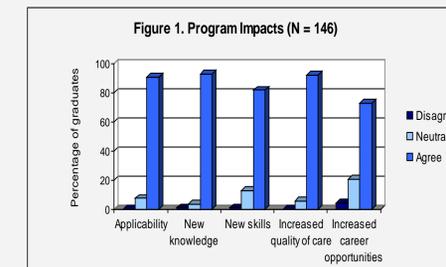
- There have been 555 registrants since April 2014.
- Upon program completion, all graduates (N=146; 100%) completed a mandatory online survey.
- Graduates were: nurses (31%), allied health professionals (27%), other regulated (2%) and non-regulated professionals (28%) and other roles (12%).

This certificate program is endorsed by the Division of Geriatric Medicine, McMaster University & the St. Peter's McMaster University Chair in Aging.
Visit the Geriatric Certificate Program Website:

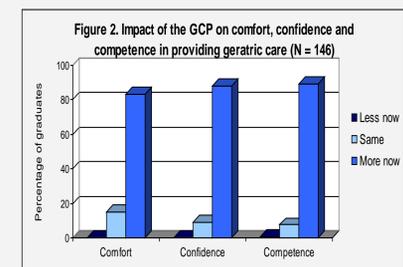
www.geriatriccp.ca

Results

- The majority of graduates agreed that the program was applicable to clinical practice (91%), provided new knowledge (93%) and practical skills (84%), and increased the quality of care they provide (92%) and career opportunities (73%; Fig. 1).
- In comparison to prior to the program, upon graduation the majority of graduates reported being more confident (88%), comfortable (83%), and competent (89%) to provide optimal geriatric care.



*5-point rating scale: strongly disagree – strongly agree. Disagree = sum of disagree and strongly disagree ratings; Agree = sum of agree and strongly agree ratings.



*5-point rating scale: much less now – much more now. Less now = sum of much less and less now ratings; More now = sum of more now and much more now ratings.

- **Self-reported practice changes** included: Improved assessment and management of responsive behaviours, increased use of standardized tools, improved communication, advocacy, education and support to clients, and improved staff education:

"Improved response to responsive behaviours. Improved approach to decreasing instances of behaviours"

"I find myself using the assessment tools from PIECES on a regular basis while working with elderly patients."

"Ability to offer support with evidence based strategies."

"I have updated our training programs for front line staff."

- **Suggestions for improvements** included: Increased number of courses available and frequency of availability; practicum opportunities; increased awareness and support among management (learning culture change); and increased funding opportunities for course fees.

Conclusion

The GCP provides a significant opportunity for practicing health care professionals to build their capacity for geriatric care. Collaborative partnerships among existing education programs can easily and efficiently bring together existing, well developed curriculums to create a comprehensive program aimed at improving geriatric care.