

## A Message from the CLSA Research Team

More than 20 years have passed since the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) was first envisioned at a planning workshop in Aylmer, Quebec.

Our first telephone-interview participants joined the study more than a decade ago, and this year, we marked 10 years since the doors of our Data Collection Sites opened.

As a longstanding participant in the study, we are so grateful for your ongoing contributions and commitment to the CLSA. Whether you participate in person or by phone, the information you provide is helping to drive more than 500 research projects currently underway in Canada and around the world. You can read more about these projects on the CLSA website or view our Google Map of approved projects by visiting: <http://bit.ly/CLSAprojects>.

CLSA research results have been making headlines more

than ever this year. Research findings on the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health of older adults were featured in *The Globe and Mail*, and *The New York Times* highlighted research on how even mild COVID-19 can result in mobility problems.

Other recent CLSA research findings explore the link between diabetes and early menopause, the low uptake of the pneumonia vaccine amongst the most vulnerable, and the lifelong impacts of adverse childhood experiences.

In November 2021, the Weston Family Foundation announced \$12 million in funding for a new CLSA initiative to examine the many factors that influence brain health as we age.

The CLSA-Weston Healthy Brains, Healthy Aging Initiative, which launched this fall, will include 6,000 CLSA participants who will be asked to undergo brain imaging and stool sam-

ple analysis. The initiative will also introduce wearable activity trackers to shed light on how lifestyle factors – such as sleep, physical activity and diet – influence healthy cognitive aging.

During your next interview, you may also be invited to participate in a new web questionnaire to collect information on family history of disease and sexual health. This online survey will launch by the end of the year and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Earlier this year, individual findings from the CLSA COVID-19 Antibody Study were communicated to participants who took part in the study. Blood samples from more than 18,500 individuals were tested for the presence of COVID-19 antibodies. A summary of findings is included in this newsletter.

Thank you again for your participation in the CLSA. Without you this important work would not be possible.



This fall, the CLSA introduced wearable activity trackers to enhance information already being collected about physical activity and sleep. Participants who visit Data Collection Sites will be invited to take part in data collection that involves wearing mobility trackers, sleep trackers or both (left). The TicWatch and ActiGraph mobility trackers (middle). The CLSA-Weston Healthy Brains, Health Aging Initiative has supported the introduction of brain imaging into the CLSA (right).

# Participant Spotlight



*Mary, 90, from Winnipeg on her mantra for aging and living well.*

## What is your personal approach to healthy aging?

My cardiologist encouraged me to be active and remain active. I was lucky enough to live through complications from an emergency heart bypass at age 70. I was in the hospital for two months. After that great illness, I thought that I would possibly live maybe two years as a semi-invalid. Oh, boy, was I wrong! So don't ask me how I reached 90. After all that I don't know myself, and I don't care. I've been able to do what I want to do. I love gardening. I figure I've been granted 21 years. I'm very, very lucky. I'm certainly not going to complain about the little ups and downs.

## Any particular mantra on aging and living well?

I think a person's life is what you make of it. You can sit there and whine about the little things that go wrong, or the big things that go wrong. You can sit there and wring your hands over your mistakes. And I've made plenty. But do you have to sort of say, well, this has happened you what you did was the wrong decision. And you pick up the pieces and you keep on going.

# Rising Stars: Showcasing CLSA Trainees



"With the current demographic shift to an older Canadian population, having such an in-depth longitudinal study of middle-aged and older Canadians is beneficial for so many reasons. Personally, I am looking forward to analyzing future waves of CLSA data to be able to better understand longitudinal predictors of health and well-being. With the talented team of researchers working with CLSA data I am confident that the findings from CLSA data will make a big impact in the quality of life of Canadians by informing policy, program implementation, and education systems."

*Shawna Hopper is a first-year PhD student in the Department of Gerontology at Simon Fraser University. Her CLSA research has examined driving avoidance, satisfaction with life and psychological and social factors linked with subjective cognitive decline. Her doctoral research will examine the impact of social isolation on older adults' mental health throughout the pandemic.*

Using data from about 4,500 participants in the CLSA self-identified as Veterans, researchers examined the frequency of symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to better understand the mental health of Veterans. The study found:



The CLSA participants who screened positive for PTSD included:

- 7.6% of regular force Canadian Veterans
- 4.9% of reserve force Canadian Veterans
- 8% of non-Canadian Veterans and;
- 5.2% of non-Veterans.

Factors associated with increased odds of PTSD among Veterans included:

- younger age
- being fully retired
- depression
- self-reported anxiety
- having two or more chronic health conditions

# Spotlight on the CLSA COVID-19 Research

Between November 2020 to July 2021, the CLSA COVID-19 Antibody Study (also known as the CLSA COVID-19 Seroprevalence Study) collected and analyzed blood samples from CLSA participants in 10 provinces to test for the presence of antibodies that indicates infection due to the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The CLSA COVID-19 Antibody study was funded and conducted in partnership with the Government of Canada's COVID-19 Immunity Task Force. The mandate of this task force is to describe how widespread the coronavirus infection is in Canada.

## Findings from the COVID-19 Antibody Study



18,536 CLSA participants provided blood samples between November 2020 to July 2021.



Between November 2020 and July 2021, 3.9% of participants tested positive for antibodies that indicates infection from the SARS-CoV-2 virus.



17,311 blood samples were able to be tested for the presence of antibodies that indicates infection due to SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes COVID-19.



Overall, younger participants (aged 50-69 years) were most likely to test positive for antibodies that indicates infection from the SARS-CoV-2 virus.



Rates of positivity increased over time in all provinces.



Additional results available here: [clsa-elcv.ca/antibody-results-update](https://clsa-elcv.ca/antibody-results-update)

## In Brief

### **CLSA researchers call for more effective interventions to combat depression and loneliness among older adults**

Using data from the CLSA, investigators Drs. Andrew Wister and Laura Kadowaki from Simon Fraser University's Gerontology Research Centre (GRC) conducted a study that found an increase in rates of depression and loneliness among older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report showed that older women aged 65 to 74 experienced a 67 per cent increase in loneliness and a rise in depression from 19 per cent pre-pandemic to 23 per cent in 2020. The survey data also revealed that loneliness increased by 45 per cent among men aged 65 to 74 with a rise in depression from 12 to 14 per cent. The findings suggest the need for more coordinated and effective efforts to address the issue going forward.

### **CLSA researcher receives Order of Canada**

Dr. Parminder Raina has been named a member of the Order of Canada for his work as lead principal investigator of the CLSA. The award – one of the country's highest honours – recognizes his research to understand and improve older adults' health and quality of life.

## Are you age 70 or older?

CLSA participants over 70 years of age are asked to designate a proxy decision-maker and a proxy information provider. A proxy decision-maker acts on participant's behalf if they are no longer able to make decisions for themselves about their participation in the CLSA. A proxy information provider answers interview questions on a participant's behalf if the participant becomes unable to take part in the study. A proxy information provider could be a family member, friend or caregiver. Please get in touch with us to learn more.



# Making Headlines

## Green neighbourhoods can boost mental health

Can a walk through the park benefit your mental health? New research from the CLSA suggests one pathway to better mental health involves increasing green space in urban areas. The study, published in *Environmental Research*, analyzed data from nearly 27,000 CLSA participants and found greenness was beneficial for the mental health of middle-age and older adults living in cities. The research, undertaken by PhD candidate Susanna Abraham Cotta-giri at Carleton University, also found the benefits were strongest for those with lower income, suggesting interventions that increase greenness may help to reduce social inequities.

[bit.ly/clsa\\_greenness](https://bit.ly/clsa_greenness)

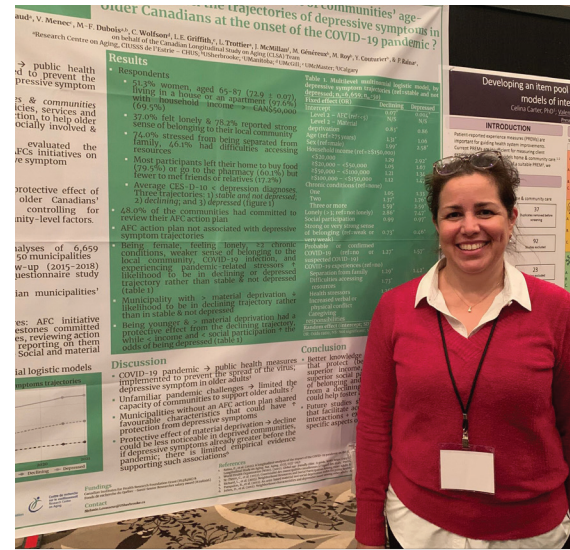
## Measuring life satisfaction among CLSA participants

A recent CLSA study published in *Rural and Remote Health* found that older adults living in urban areas tend to be less satisfied

with their lives than their rural counterparts. Dr. Philip St. John, a professor of internal medicine at Max Rady College of Medicine at the University of Manitoba, worked with a team of researchers to measure the average life satisfaction of CLSA participants aged 45-85 living in rural, mixed and urban environments across the country [bit.ly/clsa\\_life\\_satisfaction](https://bit.ly/clsa_life_satisfaction)

## Insomnia increases the likelihood of memory decline in older adults: Study

A new CLSA study has found that older people with insomnia are at greater risk of developing memory decline and long-term cognitive impairment such as dementia. The research, published in the journal *SLEEP*, is based on data from more than 26,000 CLSA participants. The study, co-led by master's student Jean-Louis Zhao of the Université de Montreal and postdoctoral fellow Dr. Nathan Cross of Concordia University, compared self-reported evaluations of sleep and memory and neuropsychological testing in several cognitive domains from 2019



Dr. Mélanie Levasseur, co-lead of the CLSA at the University of Sherbrooke, presented her CLSA research at the 2022 Canadian Association on Gerontology conference in Regina. Her research examines how the age-friendliness of municipalities can foster positive health, social participation and health equity among older adults.

and a follow-up in 2022. Participants who reported worsening sleep quality in that three-year interval also had greater odds of reporting subjective memory decline. [bit.ly/clsa\\_sleep\\_memory](https://bit.ly/clsa_sleep_memory)

# CLSA Events

## Join us for a participant update

You are invited to a national update on the CLSA this spring. Webinars will be held over Zoom with options to join in French or English. Visit [www.clsa-elcv.ca](https://www.clsa-elcv.ca) for updates. All previous events are available on the CLSA website: [www.clsa-elcv.ca/stay-informed/clsa-videos](https://www.clsa-elcv.ca/stay-informed/clsa-videos)

# Keep in Touch

As always, it's extremely important to provide us with any changes to your contact information. Have you moved, changed your telephone number or email address since you were last contacted by the CLSA, or have you recently created an email address that you can share with us?

**We also invite you to add an alternate contact to ensure we don't lose touch with you. We may contact your alternate contact should we be unable to reach you. Visit our online form, or contact us by email or phone to add a contact.**

 Web: [clsa-elcv.ca/update-your-details](https://www.clsa-elcv.ca/update-your-details)

 Email: [info@clsa-elcv.ca](mailto:info@clsa-elcv.ca)

 Phone: 1-866-999-8303

If you are interested in being featured in a future CLSA newsletter, contact us by email or phone.