

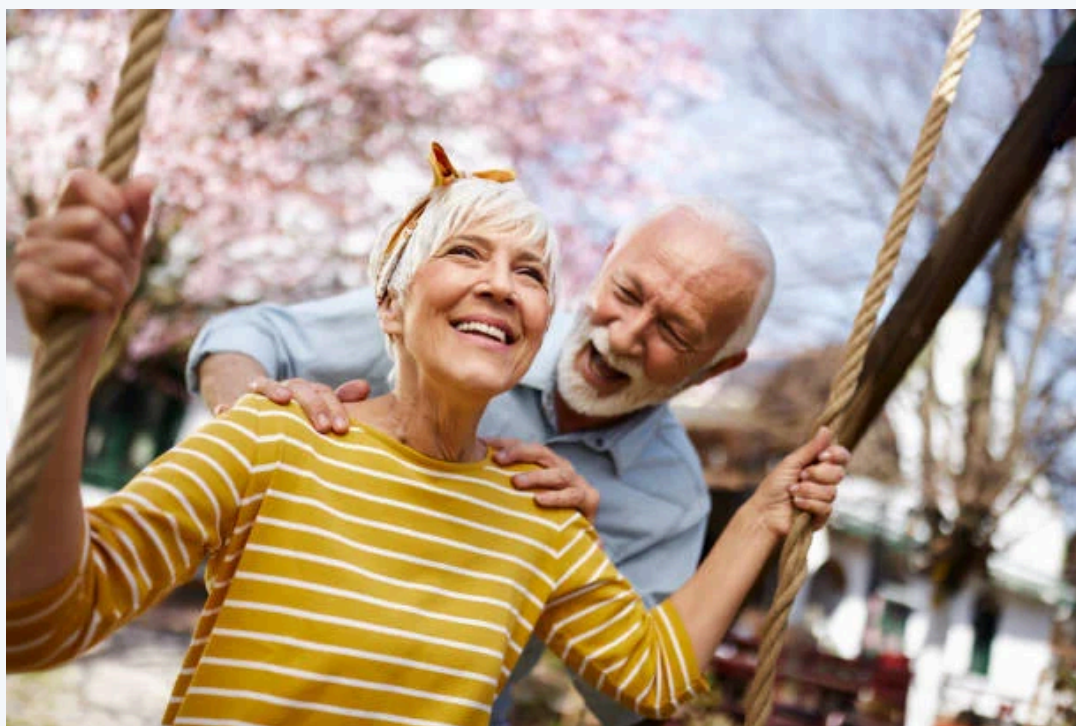


ALBERTA ASSOCIATION  
ON GERONTOLOGY

*Improving the Lives of Older Albertans*

## AAG Communique March 2025

*"In the Spring, I have counted 136 different kinds of weather  
inside 24 hours". Mark Twain*



### News & Views

Highlighting Key Developments in the Province

**Kudos to Educators Across the Province** who shared their work to optimize enrolment for BScN students, practical nurses and healthcare

aides. Enrolment numbers are coming back up! Also, members of AAG's Stakeholder Collaborative Committee on February 25th learned innovations across all educators to bring their educational programs into rural communities and enhance curriculum impact with simulation.

### **Alberta Health's Workforce Division has an updated Health Workforce Strategy (December 2024).**

This Report has 5 Strategic Focus Areas:

1. Strategic Focus Area 1: **Support and Retain**
2. Strategic Focus Area 2: **Attract**
3. Strategic Focus Area 3: **Enable**
4. Strategic Focus Area 4: **Strengthen** (check out the article below on Mentoring)
5. Strategic Focus Area 5: **Innovate and Evolve**

### **AAG's Networking Dinner on February 26, 2025 - The Silver Tech Revolution: Empowering Older Adults in the Digital Age**

- **Tim Murphy from Alberta Innovates (AI)** reinforced the need for a refocused health system with new ways of thinking and service delivery approaches with a growing and aging population and the health system challenges that cuts across the system: climate change, COVID-19 and its aftermath, indigenous healthcare, healthcare human resources crisis, changing demographics, growing health inequities, and Artificial Intelligence in healthcare. He outlined the importance of action related to privacy of health care and considerations related to interoperability of systems across all health care components.
- **Reg Joseph from Health Cities** provided examples of community engagement to implement technology solutions for connected teams and communities.
- Watch for more information about a collaborative initiative by **AI, ACCA and AAG** to develop a road map to modernize community and continuing care with technology.
- Enjoy the new feature in *AAGmag* regarding technology innovation.

# Welcome to the March Edition of AAGmag!

## Thought Leadership for a Refocused Health System With Well-Being for Older Albertans and Leading Practices for an Empowered Workforce and Partnerships with Caregivers

This issue dives into some of the most pressing topics and groundbreaking innovations shaping the future of aging, caregiving, and healthcare.

- It is with great enthusiasm that we launch this inaugural column series on **AgeTech**, written by Don Juzwishin—a trusted friend of the Alberta Association on Gerontology and editor of the new book *AgeTech Innovations in Healthcare for Older Adults* (Springer). Over the coming months, this series will provide thought-provoking insights into these topics and more, serving as a forum to explore critical gaps in knowledge, policy, and practice in this rapidly evolving field.
- Jill Petrovic and Barb Ferguson from Alzheimers Calgary provide an overview of the StillMe Living with Dementia Movement. Mark your calendars for the **May 28, 2025** Alberta Association on Gerontology "**Still Me Best Practices Learning**" event in Calgary, with Dr. Al Power and Suellen Beatty.
- Aligned with the AAG's emphasis on supporting our health, social and community care workforce, Alberta's Nurse Mentor Dawn Vallet McDonald recommended Linda-Ann Elobuiké's article on the value of mentoring in nursing.
- *The integrative review Non-pharmacological management of wandering in persons with dementia: an integrative review.* Psychogeriatrics 2024 is "What's New in Academic Literature" and related to best practices in living well with dementia.

Sincerely,

Sharon Anderson  
President, AAG



## AgeTech and the Future of Aging

It is with great enthusiasm that I introduce this inaugural column on AgeTech—a term we define in our forthcoming book as any digital technology that aims to disrupt, extend, expand, or re-organize existing health and social practices to create agile opportunities that enhance the independent living of older adults. AgeTech is emerging as an indispensable tool for modernizing health care delivery and ensuring that older adults, especially those facing physical or cognitive challenges, can enjoy lives marked by comfort, dignity, and security. This column series will serve as a forum to identify and explore critical gaps in knowledge, policy, and practice in this rapidly evolving field.

### **Bridging the Digital Divide**

**Juzwishin, D., MacNeil, M., Meisen, A., Stolee, P., [AgeTech Innovations in Healthcare for Older Adults](#), Springer, April 2025.**

A foundational issue in AgeTech is the digital divide. In many communities, older adults face barriers such as unequal access to broadband, a lack of affordable devices, and limited digital literacy training. Research shows that digital exclusion is linked not only to lower quality of life but also to increased social isolation. Future columns will delve into the role of libraries, community centers, and care facilities as essential hubs for digital education. Moreover, we will explore innovative solutions tailored to home and long-term care settings where tech training may be scarce. These

efforts are crucial for ensuring that the benefits of AgeTech are accessible to all.

### **Telehealth & Remote Monitoring**

Telehealth has proven itself a powerful tool in both rural and urban settings. In rural areas, such as among farming communities, remote monitoring can bridge significant gaps in healthcare access, while in urban centers, it offers an efficient way to manage chronic conditions and reduce healthcare disparities. As digital solutions become more sophisticated, they promise not only to extend the reach of healthcare services but also to transform patient-provider interactions into more proactive, personalized care models. Our forthcoming discussions will explore the transformative impact of telehealth and remote monitoring on elder care.

### **Assistive, Adaptive, and Dementia-Focused Technologies**

AgeTech also encompasses a broad range of assistive and adaptive technologies that enhance safety, comfort, and independence. AI-driven innovations are beginning to address critical areas such as hearing, vision, mobility, and even social connection, offering promising interventions to mitigate loneliness and support mental health. In parallel, dementia-focused technologies—including smart home integrations and specialized dementia villages—are reshaping the way we approach cognitive decline. Emerging memory-supportive tools leverage artificial intelligence to improve quality of life for individuals with cognitive impairment, a topic we will explore in depth.

### **Ethical & Privacy Considerations**

As we celebrate the technological advances that AgeTech offers, we must also contend with significant ethical challenges. Balancing convenience and safety with autonomy involves rigorous consideration of privacy, data security, and informed consent—especially as AI systems become more integral to care provision. Future columns will examine how to safeguard older adults against potential misuse of their data while ensuring that innovations in AgeTech uphold the highest ethical standards.

### **Policy, Funding, and Cultural Perspectives**

The successful integration of AgeTech into mainstream healthcare depends on robust policy frameworks and strategic funding. By identifying gaps in public funding and highlighting opportunities for targeted investments, we

can support the development of technologies that not only reduce system-wide costs but also improve care quality. Additionally, it is imperative that AgeTech development be informed by diverse cultural perspectives, including Indigenous approaches to aging and caregiving. Recognizing and integrating these varied viewpoints will ensure that technological advancements are both inclusive and respectful of multi-generational caregiving needs.

### **Emerging Technologies and the Future of Care**

Looking ahead, the horizon of AgeTech is filled with exciting possibilities. Virtual and augmented reality applications, wearable health tech, and game-based interventions are set to redefine cognitive training and proactive healthcare. These technologies promise to enhance early disease detection, chronic disease management, and even end-of-life care by leveraging data analytics and personalized interventions. For example, wearable devices are already playing a crucial role in continuous monitoring and early detection of health anomalies. Our future columns will also spotlight digital care coordination platforms that integrate technology into home care, streamlining services and fostering the interoperability of health data and connectivity among caregivers, healthcare providers, and community resources.

### **Empowering Caregivers and Shaping the Future of AgeTech**

Finally, we recognize that technology's impact is not limited to the individuals receiving care but extends to their caregivers. Digital tools are increasingly being designed to support, train, and connect family caregivers—providing much-needed stress relief and peer support through AI-powered assistance and interactive platforms. The long-term impact of robotics and automation in elder care, and their role in shaping caregiving, will be a recurring theme in our series.

In this first installment, I have outlined the breadth of topics that will be addressed in the AgeTech column series. As we embark on this journey, our aim is to offer an informed, evidence-informed analysis of how digital innovations can transform the landscape of care for older adults. The future of AgeTech holds immense promise, but it is imperative that policy, practice, and ethics evolve in parallel to ensure that these innovations benefit all stakeholders.

I look forward to engaging with you on these critical issues in the months ahead.

I appreciate your interest in this dynamic and essential field. Stay tuned for further discussions that will explore these themes in greater detail.

Don Juzwishin

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## **Understanding the StillMe Movement: A new approach to dementia inclusivity, awareness and connection**

In recent years, the conversation surrounding dementia and its impact on individuals and their families has evolved dramatically. One of the more localized and innovative initiatives to emerge from this dialogue is the StillMe social movement, born from an in-depth discovery project conducted by Alzheimer Calgary in 2022 and 2023. With goals of fostering community understanding and connection for people impacted by dementia, and challenging deep-rooted perceptions and stigma, the StillMe movement seeks to build community engagement and strengthen inclusion for all affected.

Backed by research, including 31 stakeholder interviews, three focus groups, a community-wide survey, an independent environmental scan, and independent public opinion polling, the movement seeks to address critical findings about widespread perceptions related to dementia in the Calgary region. These insights highlight significant challenges for true inclusion: an overwhelming absence of hope (being progressive, with no known cure), the presence of ingrained stigma, and a pervasive fear related to these diseases and their social implications.

The research also highlighted a lack of knowledge and understanding about the fundamentals of dementia. Many individuals continue to use outdated and stigmatizing language or provide inaccurate information when explaining 'Alzheimer's disease' or 'dementia' to others.

The situation becomes more complex and layered when examining cultural nuances and the implications of accessing support. In some communities, the concept of dementia is absent, or the language used to describe

symptoms is predominantly negative or derogatory. Individuals fear judgment and social consequences tied to openly discussing dementia or seeking help.

In response to these barriers, the StillMe movement was conceived as a unique way to participate in an approachable, relatable and accessible conversation about dementia. StillMe refocuses attention and value on the individual, emphasizing their abilities, strengths, stories, and experiences rather than just their symptoms. It provides a fresh platform for fun, introductory learning opportunities and storytelling, showcasing the unique capabilities of people living with dementia to help shift perceptions over time.

As part of the StillMe social movement, Alzheimer Calgary is collaborating with AAG to sponsor two events on **Wednesday, May 28th, 2025**:

1. A **Leaders Forum**, led by AAG, will take place during the day, with the focus, "*StillMe; Inclusive Environments in Residential Care and Communities for People Living with Dementia*". We will learn and be inspired by Dr. Al Power, an internationally recognized speaker and author for living well with dementia and Canadian and provincial leaders who will share practices for advancing an ethnocultural perspective and relational care. **Watch for opportunities to register.**

2. Alzheimer Calgary welcomes community stakeholders to attend an event that aims to uplift and inspire. Dr. Al Power will be addressing the community at an evening function.

Dr. Power is an advocate for creating truly inclusive communities that prioritize the well-being of individuals living with dementia. His thought-provoking insights will explore how we can enhance community inclusivity for those living with dementia, and help them maintain their identity, purpose, and sense of connection.

**Everyone is welcome!**

**May 28th (evening) @ Mount Royal University in Calgary  
Fireside chat and refreshments included**

**Tickets are just \$20**

**Visit [www.alzheimercalgary.ca](http://www.alzheimercalgary.ca)**



This is a call to action for everyone — caregivers, community members, healthcare providers, and those who simply wish to learn more. Join us for a day of hope, optimism, and inspiration that will help reshape the narrative around dementia in our community. For more information about the StillMe social movement, please visit [www.stillme.ca](http://www.stillme.ca).

Jill Petrovic and Barb Ferguson  
Alzheimers Calgary

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## Health Care Workforce: How embracing mentorship can empower the next generation of health-care leaders



"Mentorship has been a cornerstone of my nursing career, giving me the confidence to embrace leadership roles and achieve a healthy work-life balance."

Linda-Ann Elobuike

Mentorship became a significant concept for me when I embarked on a new career in nursing. The value of mentorship extends beyond mere professional growth; it is a catalyst for accelerating one's journey toward becoming a competent, confident and effective nurse.

The benefits of mentoring include increasing confidence as an independent professional; improving skills, values and behaviours essential to providing high-quality nursing care; and maintaining a lifelong learning journey that includes increased confidence, socialization, future career ambitions, commitment to the organization, and a greater sense of responsibility (van Rooyen, Jordan, ten Ham-Baloyi, & Caka, 2018). Indeed, I have

experienced a shift in the way I approach my career and professional development since I embraced mentoring as an undergraduate nursing student transitioning into the nursing profession.

Mentorship is a relationship where the mentor, usually someone with a higher level of experience, provides three distinct types of support to a protege to help them develop their professional skills: psychosocial support (counsellorship, friendship), career-related support (coaching, sponsorship) and role modelling (Wang, Tomlinson, & Noe, 2010). From my experience, an individual can have several mentors who will fulfil distinct aspects of the mentorship relationship. Currently, I have a career mentor and a clinical mentor.

In this article, I aim to illuminate the transformative role of mentorship in nursing. Mentorship is pivotal in shaping the next generation of health-care leaders, instilling them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to lead effectively. As I recount my journey and share insights from my mentoring relationships, I aim to inspire others to seek and value mentorship as a vital component of their professional and personal growth.

### **Benefits of mentorship in nursing**

In my final year of nursing school, I took a leadership course, and one of the lectures featured guests who talked about the power of mentorship. What struck me the most was that, in many ways, the guest speaker represented all the things I wanted to achieve in my nursing career. Needless to say, shortly after that talk, I reached out to the speaker, and she was more than willing to take me on as a mentee. This helped me early on in my career, as our mentoring sessions were filled with valuable advice that would have taken me a long time to come by on my own.

My mentor encouraged me to find a clinical mentor on the floor and be the best clinician possible. I learned valuable insights on managing conflict at work and tips to improve my knowledge, and she also pointed me to valuable resources to take advantage of. This mentoring relationship led to improved job satisfaction and helped me enhance my clinical skills and knowledge. My confidence also significantly improved; my manager told me several times that she was impressed with my confidence and leadership

abilities, even as a new nurse.

As a result, I was given opportunities to serve on quality improvement initiatives and take on informal leadership opportunities. Another benefit I observed was a better work-life balance because I knew my limits and when to take a break or ask for help. This led to better satisfaction overall in my first year of nursing.

### **Advice for a successful mentor-mentee relationship**

For a successful mentor-mentee relationship, it is essential to consider the dynamics of that interaction. Here are six things you can do to maintain a positive relationship:

- One of the first steps for seeking out a mentor, whether a clinical mentor or a career mentor for personal development, is to consider the dynamics between the mentee and the mentor. As a mentee, seek a mentor who has something you desire to achieve professionally or personally. It may be someone in the same specialty as you, someone who is an excellent clinician (if that is something you aspire to) or someone who shares the same values as you do.
- Take advantage of your mutual networks. Ask for an introduction, approach the person if this is an option, or send a professional email requesting to be their mentee. Highlight what you want to achieve from the relationship.
- Once the mentee's request is accepted, it is important to set goals for the relationship, including the frequency and locations of meetings.
- Develop and maintain trust and respect, as they are vital aspects of a successful mentee-mentor relationship. Keep up with meeting times and be open about any challenges you might have that will affect the relationship.
- Ask for feedback regularly and communicate openly. I like to write down questions before the meeting and have an informal agenda. This respects the mentor's time and ensures that the mentee gets the best value from each meeting.
- Employ active listening skills and ask for clarifications when needed. Mentors are an immense support when they know how to help you achieve your goals.

## **Implementing mentorship in nursing practice**

There are several formal and informal strategies to implement mentorship in nursing. In my case, I was introduced to mentorship during my undergraduate program. Nursing programs can also offer courses/topics on the value of mentorship in nursing, and nursing educators must play a significant role in promoting and facilitating these opportunities.

## **Why a long-term care mentorship program for internationally educated nurses is desperately needed**

Also, as part of new graduate orientations, mentorship opportunities should be considered to pair new nurses with senior nurses on the floor. These opportunities will help build confidence in new nurses.

In addition, organizations should consider investing in identifying and training mentors, which can also help with workforce retention (Bélanger-Hardy, Palmer, Kokorelias, Chan, & Law, 2023) and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of mentoring initiatives. Managers and health-care leaders should encourage mentee-mentor relationships in their teams.

## **Conclusion**

Mentorship has been a cornerstone of my nursing career, giving me the confidence to embrace leadership roles and achieve a healthy work-life balance. My mentors' guidance and support have enhanced my clinical skills and empowered me to contribute to quality improvement initiatives and take on informal leadership roles.

Inspired by the profound impact of mentorship, I have now begun mentoring internationally educated nurses, giving back to the profession that has given me so much. Mentorship is more than just a support system; it is a powerful tool for empowering the next generation of health-care leaders. By embracing and promoting mentorship, we can ensure our nursing workforce's continued excellence and resilience.

## **References**

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Article courtesy Canadian Nurse, The Canadian Nurses Association and suggested by Dawn Vallet-McDonald, Provincial Nurse Senior Practice Consultant at Alberta Health Services.

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## What's New in Academic Literature?

### ***Non-pharmacological management of wandering in persons with dementia: an integrative review. Psychogeriatrics 2024.***

Wandering is a behavior that affects a significant portion of individuals with dementia, with estimates suggesting that between 15% to 80% of these patients engage in wandering activities at some point in their journey. This behavior not only poses challenges for caregivers and healthcare providers but also reflects a deeper human instinct to explore and seek connection, even in the face of cognitive decline. As people with dementia navigate their changing realities, they may find comfort in familiar surroundings or become curious about their environments, prompting movement. However, wandering can lead to safety concerns, emotional distress, and increased caregiver burden. Recognizing the complexity of this behavior is crucial for developing effective strategies to manage it.

The 2024 review, *Non-pharmacological management of wandering in*

*persons with dementia: an integrative review* explores the various reasons behind wandering, highlights the potential benefits of movement, and discusses non-pharmacological approaches that can help ensure the safety and well-being of individuals with dementia.

Wandering in dementia patients can stem from several factors, often reflecting the natural human desire for exploration and connection:

1. **Cognitive Decline:** Forgetfulness about surroundings can prompt a search for familiar places or people.
2. **Disorientation:** Confusion regarding time and space can foster a sense of curiosity, encouraging patients to wander.
3. **Restlessness or Agitation:** Moving around serves as an outlet for energy and can help manage stress.
4. **Communication Challenges:** Inability to articulate needs may drive wandering, allowing patients to express unmet desires for food or companionship.
5. **Circadian Rhythms:** Changes in activity levels, especially in the evening, can influence wandering behavior as a natural response to restlessness.
6. **Environmental Stimuli:** Engaging surroundings may spark interest and encourage exploration.
7. **Physical Needs:** The desire for exercise and activity can present opportunities for wandering, promoting physical health and well-being.

Wandering behaviors in people living with dementia has both positive and negative impacts. Understanding both the positive and negative impacts can assist providers and family caregivers in developing strategies to manage wandering behaviors while maximizing benefits and minimizing risks for dementia patients.

#### **Positive Impacts:**

1. **Physical Activity:** Wandering can promote physical exercise, helping to improve circulation, strength, and overall physical health.
2. **Mental Stimulation:** Exploration can provide mental engagement and stimulation, potentially benefiting cognitive function and mood.
3. **Sense of Independence:** Allowing patients to wander may foster a

sense of autonomy and independence, which can enhance their overall quality of life.

4. **Social Interaction:** Wandering can lead to social interactions with other individuals, including caregivers and peers, thereby reducing feelings of isolation.

5. **Stress Relief:** Movement can serve as a natural outlet for stress and restlessness, helping patients to manage their emotions more effectively.

6. **Discovery of Comfort:** Patients may wander in search of familiar or comforting environments, which can provide reassurance and a sense of safety.

### **Negative Impacts:**

1. **Safety Risks:** Wandering can pose significant safety risks, including the potential for getting lost, falls, or wandering into hazardous areas.

2. **Injury:** There is an increased risk of injuries related to falls, collisions, or accidental encounters with dangerous objects.

3. **Increased Caregiver Burden:** Wandering behaviors can lead to heightened stress and workload for caregivers, resulting in feelings of fatigue and anxiety.

4. **Emotional Distress:** Patients may experience confusion, fear, or agitation when unable to recognize their surroundings or when they feel lost.

5. **Variance in Routine:** Wandering may disrupt established routines, causing challenges in providing effective care and support.

6. **Potential for Emergency Situations:** In extreme cases, wandering can lead to emergency situations requiring intervention from healthcare or emergency services.

The most promising non-pharmacological interventions for managing wandering behaviors in individuals with dementia include:

1. **Individualized Care Plans:** Tailoring care plans to each patient's life history, preferences, and needs allows for targeted strategies that acknowledge their unique triggers for wandering.

2. **Environmental Modifications:** Creating safe, engaging environments with easily navigable spaces and identifiable landmarks can reduce wandering and enhance patient comfort. This includes using visual cues

and signage to guide individuals.

3. **Structured Activities:** Implementing structured, meaningful activities that encourage engagement and physical movement can help channel the urge to wander into safe, productive routines.

4. **Exercise Programs:** Regular physical activity not only promotes health but can also satisfy the need for movement. Group exercises can further provide a social component that might deter wandering.

5. **Pet Therapy:** Interactions with therapy animals can provide companionship and comfort, possibly reducing restlessness and the desire to wander.

6. **Doll Therapy:** For some patients, the use of dolls can fulfill emotional needs and reduce anxiety, leading to calmer behavior and decreased wandering.

7. **Technological Solutions:** Smart home technologies, including sensors and GPS tracking, can enhance safety by monitoring wandering behaviors and guiding individuals back to secure areas when needed.

8. **\*\*Caregiver Training and Support\*\*:** Educating caregivers about the nature of wandering and providing them with strategies to manage it can significantly reduce stress and enhance the care provided to dementia patients.

9. **Music and Reminiscence Therapy:** Engaging patients in music that resonates with their past or with familiar memories can evoke positive emotions and reduce the likelihood of wandering.

10. **Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques:** Teaching mindfulness practices, such as deep breathing or guided imagery, can help reduce anxiety and agitation, which may contribute to wandering tendencies. These interventions, when implemented effectively, can promote safety, enhance life quality, and nurture the independence of individuals with dementia while alleviating the strain on caregivers.

Citation: Park, S.; Lee, Y. Non-pharmacological management of wandering in persons with dementia: an integrative review. *Psychogeriatrics* 2024, 24, 1160-1167, doi:10.1111/psyg.13173.

We have permission to share the article with AAG members who are interested in reading the full article. Please email: [info@albertaaging.ca](mailto:info@albertaaging.ca)

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## Scholarships & Awards

**Vivien Lai Changemaker Awards** - The purpose of this award is to recognize individual or team merit in support of Alberta's transformative journey in community social/health services integration.

- [Innovation in Housing, Continuing Care or Residential Services](#)
- [Innovation in Community Social/Health Services Integration](#)

[Mary Morrison Davis Award](#) - This award recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the Alberta Association on Gerontology (AAG) or to the field of gerontology.

[Health Care Aide Student Bursary Award](#) - Nominees must be currently enrolled in an approved Health Care Aide certificate program in Alberta and nominated by their program.

### [Provincial Graduate Student Awards](#)

- **Grace Maier Memorial Scholarship - Master's** - The Master's Graduate Student Scholarship is named in honor of Grace Maier, a distinguished leader in the field of gerontology in Alberta. Grace served as the Director of Specialized Geriatrics at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, where she pioneered innovative programs designed to enhance outcomes for older adults.
- **AAG Graduate Scholarship - PhD** - One of the graduate awards will be awarded to an outstanding PhD student in the field of aging and focusing their dissertation research in this area.

All nominations and applications must be submitted by no later than **Friday, April 11, 2025 @ 4:00 pm**

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## Registration for the 2025 Healthy Aging Alberta Summit is open!



**Join Healthy Aging Alberta from October 6-9, 2025, at the Delta Hotel in Edmonton and online as we explore The Tapestry of Aging: Threads of Connection & Well-being.**

Together, let's weave a tapestry of connection and collaboration to make Alberta one of the best places to grow older.

**Early bird pricing is available until March 31st - or until tickets sell out!**

[REGISTER HERE](#)

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## 2025-26

# MEMBERSHIP

### Recruitment & Renewal

Kindly be reminded to renew your membership for the upcoming year. AAG's membership drive officially begins on April 1st; however, we encourage you to renew now to ensure uninterrupted benefits.

Starting in 2025, each member will be assigned a unique membership ID number, which will be required for upcoming event registrations.

Membership Registration & Renewal

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