



## Perceptions of the Transition Process to Long-Term Care

### Background to the study:

During the spring and summer of 2007, 34 long-term care homes in the Champlain region distributed questionnaires to the family members of residents who had moved in to their facilities during the previous 18 months. Family members were asked to describe their perceptions of the transition process and to suggest topics for a workshop to help them prepare for the transition. A total of 326 family members returned a questionnaire and this newsletter highlights some of the results.

### Family Members' and Residents' Characteristics:

Most of the family members were the adult children of the resident (63%), another family member (19%), or spouse (14%). The move to the long-term care home had occurred between four and ten months earlier, and was the first move for the majority of the family members and residents (74%). Most had either moved to the long-term care home from a hospital (41%) or from their own homes (26%).

### Family Members' Perceptions of the Transition Experience

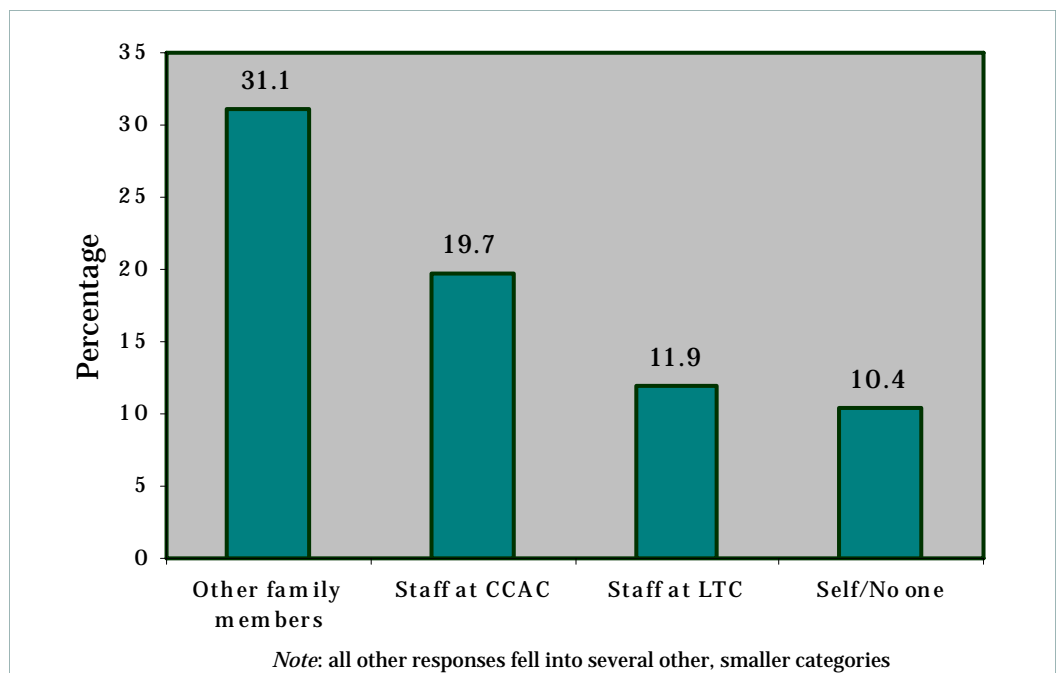
When asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements concerning their experience of the transition to a long-term care home, family members most agreed that the home was well prepared on moving day and received the family well. They also agreed the information the family had provided to the home — such as likes and dislikes, personal care needs — had been well received and respected by the staff. In essence, they felt that their family was being welcomed to the home and that the concerns they had for their loved one were understood.

Those aspects of the transition that family members experienced as most difficult were the lack of flexibility in the admis-

sion process, the lack of sufficient time to make all the necessary arrangements prior to the move, and the lack of control they felt they had in the decision-making around the admission (e.g., choosing a home, selecting a moving day). Each of these aspects of the transition experience reflects broader systemic issues, rather than specific procedures used by the long-term care homes in Champlain region.

One area of possible concern is the lack of a primary support within the system to whom family members might look for guidance and support throughout the admission process. At present, most family members rely principally on others within their family for support, or take on sole responsibility themselves (see Chart).

Principal Source of Support to Family Member



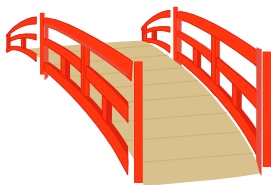
## Family members' suggestions:

When asked about their experiences during the move to a long-term care home, family members identified several areas of concern with the transition process, as well as possible solutions to help ease it, for them, for their loved one involved in the move, and for the staff at the home.

Family members also suggested a number of topics that could be the focus of workshops designed to better educate and support family members during the transition and to better prepare the new resident for the transition.

This project was conducted in collaboration with:

### Partnerships in Transitional Care



This summary was created by Bryan Smale, Sherry Dupuis, and Colleen Whyte of the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program at the University of Waterloo. For more information about MAREP, visit the website at: [www.marep.uwaterloo.ca](http://www.marep.uwaterloo.ca).



## Concerns with the transition process...

### Perceptions of Family

#### Experience of *Family*

- Feelings of guilt
- Feelings of helplessness
- Apprehension over making the "right choice"



#### Experience of *Resident*

- Confusion and anxiety
- Emotional trauma



#### Role of Staff

- Create a welcoming environment
- Present a knowledgeable and assuring image



#### Process of Admission

- Lengthy wait, sudden admission
- Systemic issues with CCAC
- Taking family distance into account



### Possible Solutions to Ease Transition

- Better preparation *prior* to admission
- Better preparation *at time* of admission
- Getting to know a new resident
- Support resident through adjustment period
- Staff training on dementia care
- Initial contact with staff represents first impression for family
- Staff need to further appreciate family input
- More time to accept new "home"
- Allow greater flexibility in process
- Process is not transparent to family members

## Topics for workshops:

### Educating and Supporting the Family during the Transition

- Informing Family about the Admission Process and Daily Life in Long-Term Care
- Providing Emotional Support to Family Members at Time of Admission

Family members struggle with every aspect of the admission process and suggested workshop sessions on: (a) how to select a home; (b) what to look for in a home; (c) the role of staff and expectations of family members; (d) how to discuss the move with a parent (especially if he or she is against a potential move); and (e) how to fill out the application itself.

At admission, family members feel overwhelmed with guilt and doubt regarding the move to long-term care. Understanding the emotions around a transition would help alleviate further anxiety. So, families would appreciate support: (a) from "someone who's been there" and insight about how they will feel throughout the process; (b) about the different phases the resident will go through once admitted to long-term care; and (c) how to deal with the spouse "left behind".

### Preparing a New Resident for the Transition

- Ensuring their Family Member "Fits In" to their New Residence

Once admitted to a home, family members are concerned about how the new resident will "fit in" to the home. Workshops could include information on: (a) recreational opportunities available; (b) how the new resident will be cared for and introduced to the new routine (e.g., dining, personal care, recreational activities); and (c) how the family can participate in the day-to-day routine of their family member.