

From the Guest Editor

Care Work

This issue of *WORK* focuses on care work, primarily care provided to older adults. We define care work as the work required to assist family members, friends, or clients, who require supervision or assistance with everyday activities due to disability or chronic illness. Care work, paid or unpaid, is marginalized in the North American context. Unpaid caregiving to family members or friends is seen as a natural extension of family responsibility and relationships, rather than a shared responsibility of society. Paid care provision is also marginalized in much the same way that paid child care is.

It has been a privilege to gather these papers providing diverse views of care work. Two papers focusing on family caregiving and how it intersects with employment. Duxbury, Higgins and Smart's paper provides an exploration of the role of caregiver physical, financial, and emotional strain in the experiences of family caregivers who are employed, using a large population-based Canadian dataset. The dynamics of providing care while working are well represented in their analyses of the effects of family type, proximity to care receiver, and gender. Lashewicz's case study gives a compelling illustration of both the sacrifices of a family caregiver and the systematic devaluing of her role. Through her presentation of a family dispute, Lashewicz shows how personal sacrifice to provide care can be interpreted by others as avoidance of the stresses of paid work and independent living.

Two papers deal with issues related to the marginalization of paid care provision. Keefe, Knight, Martin Matthews, and Légaré's literature review shows that compensation, education and training, quality assurance, and working conditions are all issues arising in literature about home support workers. They pose strate-

gies to increase recruitment and retention. Lanoix provides a philosophical analysis of the marginalization of the home or institutional care worker, demonstrating how care has been reduced to assembly-line work with the relational element removed. In contrast with the pervasive view of the family caregiving role as an extension of a family relationship, Lanoix shows us that the view of the paid care worker's role is demeaned by the focus on care as a commodity. Care becomes tasks that can be performed by interchangeable workers rather than care that encompasses communication and relationships.

The importance of the relationship and communication aspects of care work is underlined by Vezina, Robichaud, Voyer, and Pelletier's research. Their paper explores the importance of identity cues that family members share with paid care providers of institutionalized people with dementia. Identity cues are biographical knowledge (seniors' food preferences, meaningful objects, hobbies, childhood and adult life memories, and others significant roles and events) used by family and healthcare personnel to stimulate, trigger signals and incite seniors to interact with their immediate surroundings.

Vezina et al.'s results resonate with those of MacDonald, Weeks, and McGinnis-Perry. Their research explores the role of ethicists in helping families and health care providers make end of life decisions. Further, their study underscores the importance of clear lines of communication with health professionals, not only about the particulars of the case but of the life story of the individual in question and the meaning of health and illness events in the context of the story.

Zloty, Roger, and Robchuk's paper proposes a solution to address the communication, support needs,

and indeed the marginalization of family and friend caregivers. Their networks approach is a systems level answer to the coordination, information and support needs of caregivers. While their proposal is formulated in the Canadian context, there are ideas for system level coordination of caregiving and paid care provision that may be transferrable to other jurisdictions.

I hope that you enjoy the multifaceted view of care work that these papers provide. I would like to thank Karen Jacobs for her mentorship and willingness to embrace the topic of care work. I also thank Victoria Hall for her hard work in assembling this issue.

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