

# CANADIAN CENTRE FOR ACTIVITY AND AGING ABOUT

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## The Beginning

In 1988, negotiations about the development of a new research centre began between the University of Western Ontario (Western) and St. Joseph's Health Care London (SJHC). These discussions led to the establishment of the Centre for Activity and Aging (Centre) at the Mount St. Joseph's site in 1989. The Centre began as a research and community resource centre, affiliated with the Lawson Research Institute of St. Joseph's Health Centre and the Faculties of Kinesiology and of Medicine and Dentistry at Western.

## The Space

The Mount St. Joseph's site originally housed the research laboratories, offices and exercise facilities for the Centre. The site has since changed ownership and now houses the community outreach team, exercise facilities and applied research facilities. The gymnasium is used for the development of model community physical activity programs and for the training of fitness leaders. The basic research laboratories have moved to the Labatt Health Sciences Building at Western.

## The Research

Current basic research is focused on studying:

- The ways in which older individuals differ from young people in their physiological responses to exercise;
- The physiological limitations to exercise in older adults;
- The physiological and biochemical causes of muscle fatigue;
- Properties of muscle in the aged;
- Cardiovascular function and muscle metabolism;
- Adaptations with exercise training in older adults and physical activity guidelines.

## The Community Outreach Team

Shortly after its establishment the Centre received a federal grant to develop exercise and leadership programs for older adults. This funding provided the stimulus for the development of an extensive community outreach team to devise strategies to promote the independence of older adults. These initiatives include evidence-based prototype physical activity programs and leadership training courses for older adults.

## The Programs

The CCAA offers exercise classes Monday to Friday to approximately 500 members. The average age of these participants is 75, some are as young as 50 and several are in their 90s. Exercise programs at the CCAA include combined fitness classes (cardio and strength training) as well as personal training, strength training, dynamic balance training, lifestyle coaching and the Get Fit for Active Living (exercise and education for beginner senior exercisers). There are also exercise programs tailored specifically for those with osteoporosis, stroke and chronic obstructive lung disease.

## The Courses

The first evidence-based Seniors' Fitness Instructors Course (SFIC) was delivered in 1991. Other evidence-based courses followed. In 1994, the first Functional Fitness for Older Adults (FFOA) workshop was delivered and in 1995 the first personal support workers and volunteers were trained in the Home Support Exercise Program (HSEP). In 1995, Centre staff also began training qualified individuals to deliver the Centre's leadership training courses across the country through the Training for the Trainer program.

In the late 1990s the Restorative Care Education Training Course was evaluated and found to be effective in a randomized control trial supported by the Ontario Ministry of Health. This course is now being implemented nationally along with those listed above and a variety of more recent offerings including the Functional Fitness for Adult Day Programs (FFADP) and Post Rehab Exercise for Stroke (PRES).

## The Here and Now

On September 17, 1996 the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging (CCAA) was incorporated to oversee the Centre's national initiatives. Given the Centre's national agenda the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging took over the responsibilities of the Centre for Activity and Aging in 2000 and established the Centre as a national centre of excellence and qualified as a registered charitable organization. The CCAA is now an important part of the Faculty of Health Sciences and one of the longest running research centres at Western.

