



## Message from the Director

Division of Aging and Seniors (DAS)  
Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

WELCOME to the second issue of the quarterly e-mail update from the DAS Secretariat on Seniors and Emergency Preparedness (EP). This tool will help to keep us up to date on the latest activities in the field taking place in Canada and internationally.

You will note there has been a “changing of the guard” at the Division of Aging and Seniors. In late February, Director Catherine Drew accepted a new position as Director, Seniors Policy at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. We wish Catherine every success in her new endeavours.

I have agreed to serve as Acting Director of the Division of Aging and Seniors until an alternate staffing action is concluded. I can be reached at 613-952-9721 or [john\\_cox@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:john_cox@phac-aspc.gc.ca)

Sincerely,  
John Cox—A/Director

## Secretariat Activities

### WORKING GROUPS

#### Health Professionals and Continuity of Care (co-lead: Maggie Gibson, Rory Fisher, Robert Roush)

Members of the Health Professionals and Continuity of Care Working Group, in collaboration with other experts within the field of aging, will be participating in a number of conferences in order to draw greater attention to seniors and emergencies within the context of the role of health professionals and the continuity of care. These are:

- **Free communication at the 16<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine**  
May 12–15, 2009—Victoria, B.C.  
*Physical health and psychosocial issues for older persons in disasters and emergencies*  
(Gloria Gutman, Maggie Gibson, Sandi Hirst, Rory Fisher, Robert Roush)
- **Symposium at the Annual Convention of the Canadian Psychological Association**  
June 11–13, 2009—Montréal, Que.  
*Psychology and emergency management*  
(Maggie Gibson, Marita Kloseck, Danielle Maltais, Simon Gauthier, Lise Lachance, Jeanne LeBlanc, Karen Cohen)
- **Workshop at the Annual Convention of the Canadian Psychological Association**  
June 11–13, 2009—Montréal, Que.  
*Building capacity among health care providers to address psychological issues in emergency management*  
(Maggie Gibson, Louise A. Plouffe)

- **Symposium at the 19<sup>th</sup> IAGG World Congress on Gerontology and Geriatrics**  
July 5–9, 2009—Paris, France  
*Older people in emergencies: Education for health professionals*  
(Rory Fisher, Sandi Hirst, Robert Roush, Laurie Mazurik)
- **Free communication at the 19<sup>th</sup> IAGG World Congress on Gerontology and Geriatrics**  
July 5–9, 2009—Paris, France  
*Applying a life course perspective to mental health promotion for aging combat veterans*  
(Maggie Gibson)
- **Symposium at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association**  
August 6–9, 2009—Toronto, Ont.  
*International perspectives on addressing the needs of older adults during disasters*  
(Gloria Gutman, Diane Elmore, Lisa M. Brown)

### Literature Review—Roles and Responsibilities of Health Care Practitioners of Older Adults in Emergency Management

Kelly Fitzgerald’s work nears completion on the literature review on the roles and responsibilities of health practitioners of older adults in emergency management. As mentioned in the previous *EP and Seniors Update*, this review will provide a state-of-the-art overview, recommendations for addressing gaps in knowledge, and a list of recommended national and international candidates for key informant interviews to be held in a subsequent phase of the project.

### Influencing International Policy

(lead: Jane Barratt)

This Working Group held a teleconference on April 30, 2009 to discuss the implementation of work plan activities as described in the previous *EP and Seniors Update*.

### Integration of Seniors in Emergency Planning and Mitigation

(co-leads: Gerda Kaegi and Tony Thompson)

On April 7, 2009, the Working Group’s co-leads (Gerda Kaegi and Tony Thompson) and DAS Liaison (Jane Swan) met by teleconference to discuss the adaptation of the Seniors Mental Health Policy Lens (SMHPL) for EP purposes.

The draft document is near completion and will be sent to Working Group members for comments.

### Further Enhancements to the “Inventory of Resources”

On March 9, 2009, Denise Charron joined the EP Secretariat to analyse and input the 400+ resources that have been amassed for inclusion in the *Seniors and EP Inventory of Resources*. If you are searching for seniors and EP related resources, please feel free to contact Patti Gorr at [patti\\_gorr@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:patti_gorr@phac-aspc.gc.ca). We may be able to assist with your search. Although the database itself is presently only accessible at DAS, we continue to explore options to make the resources more widely available.

### Enhancing Resilience Among High Risk Populations to Maximize Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery

This four-year project will be led by Dr. Tracey O’Sullivan at the University of Ottawa, with PHAC (DAS) as the lead federal government partner. The project is funded by the Chemical, Biological, Radiological-Nuclear, and Explosives (CBRNE) Research and Technology Initiative (CRTI) of Defence Research and Development Canada.

The project will produce: an environmental scan and analysis of Canadian and international preparedness programs for high risk and vulnerable groups; a prototype tool for identifying strengths, assets and vulnerabilities; resilience building interventions in three communities; and evaluations of the interventions. ♦

## Presentations

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**Workshop on Emergency Preparedness for Vulnerable Populations, Health Canada**  
March 2-3, 2009—Papers were presented on a variety of topics relevant to chemical—biological—radiological—nuclear emergency management and vulnerable populations. Patti Gorr (DAS) presented a paper entitled: *When aging and disasters collide: Lessons learned from international case studies, current initiatives and promising models*. Once the paper has been peer-reviewed, it will be published in a special edition of the *Radiation Protection Dosimetry Journal*.

## Upcoming Conferences and Workshops

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**Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Annual Convention**  
June 11-13, 2009—Montréal, Que.  
[www.cpa.ca/convention/](http://www.cpa.ca/convention/)

**19<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Disaster Management (WCDM)**  
June 21-24, 2009—Toronto, Ont.  
Theme: *A Climate for Change—Communication, Collaboration, Cooperation*. This event is hosted by the Canadian Centre for Emergency Preparedness.  
[www.wcdm.org](http://www.wcdm.org)

**19<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics—International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG)**  
July 5-9, 2009—Paris, France  
Theme: *Longevity, Health and Wealth*  
[www.gerontologyparis2009.com](http://www.gerontologyparis2009.com)

**World Psychiatric Association (WPA)—World Health Organization Workshop on Mental Health and Psychosocial support in areas affected by disasters and conflicts**  
July 21-31, 2009—WHO Headquarters, Geneva  
[www.who.int/mentalhealth/emergencies/en](http://www.who.int/mentalhealth/emergencies/en)

**American Psychological Association (APA)**  
August 6-9, 2009—Toronto, Ont.  
[www.apa.org/convention09/homepage.html](http://www.apa.org/convention09/homepage.html)

**Canadian Association on Gerontology—38<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific and Educational Meeting**  
October 22-24, 2009—The Fairmont Hotel, Winnipeg, Man. Theme: *Where the Rivers Meet: Merging Perspectives on Aging*  
[www.cagacg.ca](http://www.cagacg.ca)

**Ideas Network Conference**  
November 8 and 29–December 1, 2009—Toronto, Ont. Theme: *Building Resilience Through Collaboration*  
[www.ideasnetwork.ca/events/conference/](http://www.ideasnetwork.ca/events/conference/)

**Gerontological Society of America—62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Scientific Meeting**  
November 18-22, 2009—Hilton Atlanta and Marriott Marquis, Atlanta, Georgia  
[www.geron.org](http://www.geron.org)

**6<sup>th</sup> Canadian Risk and Hazards Network (CRHNet) Symposium—Synergy and Creativity in Emergency Management: Engage, Communicate, Collaborate**  
November 24-27, 2009—Edmonton, Alta.  
[www.crhnet.ca](http://www.crhnet.ca)

**First Israeli International Conference on Healthcare System Preparedness & Response to Emergencies & Disasters**  
January 11-14, 2010—Tel-Aviv, Israel  
[www.oref.org.il/sip\\_storage//FILES/3/1043.pdf](http://www.oref.org.il/sip_storage//FILES/3/1043.pdf)

**Centre for Rebuilding Sustainable Communities after Disasters**  
July 12 -15, 2010—University of Massachusetts, Boston  
An international conference on *Rebuilding Sustainable Communities with the Elderly and Disabled Persons after Disasters*  
[rebuilding.umb.edu/rscepd](http://rebuilding.umb.edu/rscepd) ♦

## News from the Canadian Front

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### IDEAS Network

The IDEAS Network was created to provide organizations and communities access to resources to build resilience. This organization has become a leader in emergency preparedness and response through the development and hosting of tabletop and simulation exercises that put emergency plans to the test based on different scenarios and circumstances.

In November 2009, the IDEAS Network will be hosting an interactive working conference entitled “*Building Resilience Through Collaboration*”, in Toronto, Ont. On November 8, 2009, they will conduct a live simulation of an explosion in the downtown core and critical infrastructure disruption that requires evacuation.

On November 30, 2009, an “all sector” Pandemic Tabletop Exercise will be conducted which will examine how intersectoral impacts affect critical infrastructure services, health, food services, etc., and how they affect the public, especially vulnerable populations such as frail seniors.

December 1, 2009, will be an optional day for participating organizations and associations to consider booking their own meetings to discuss the findings of the tabletop exercises, action items arising and next steps.

Members of the three EP Working Groups supported by the DAS Secretariat on Seniors and Emergency Preparedness have been invited by the IDEAS Network to participate as *Seniors Consultants* for these simulation exercises, including script writing to develop response plans that would address potential concerns and issues for seniors. This is an exciting opportunity to put theory into practice while generating solutions and integrating seniors’ issues into emergency management.

More information concerning the IDEAS Network Conference is available at:  
[www.ideasnetwork.ca/events/conference](http://www.ideasnetwork.ca/events/conference)

### Health Canada—Health Policy Research Bulletin, April 2009, Issue 15

This issue of Health Canada’s Health Policy Research Bulletin focuses on emergency management and the public health impact of disasters. It draws upon a growing body of research that is strengthening the capacity to prevent and/or reduce these effects. The wide array of articles highlight global and Canadian disaster trends and patterns, and feature research including: meeting the needs of high-risk populations, seniors and the Canadian health care system, the health impacts of disasters on health care workers; and the potential roles for the voluntary sector in assisting communities during an emergency. This document is available at:

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca/sr-sr/pubs/hpr-rpms/bull/2009-emergency-urgence/index-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/sr-sr/pubs/hpr-rpms/bull/2009-emergency-urgence/index-eng.php)

## “Ready for Crisis” Web site

A new site developed by the Canadian Red Cross and its partners. It offers practical tools and information to help mobilize communities and voluntary sector organizations to build their resiliency and protect their clients in the event of an emergency or public health crisis. This Web site is part of a pan-Canadian initiative led by the Canadian Red Cross, Salvation Army and St. John Ambulance, in collaboration with Volunteer Canada and the Centre for Voluntary Sector Research and Development at Carleton University. The overall project is supported by more than ten partners in the voluntary sector. [www.readyforcrisis.ca](http://www.readyforcrisis.ca)

## Evaluation Report: Enhancing the Role of the Voluntary Sector in Health Emergencies

This project led by the Canadian Red Cross, the Salvation Army, St. John Ambulance, and delivered in partnership with several voluntary sector organizations was designed to encourage voluntary organizations to prepare for a health emergency and to assess whether they can contribute to building resilient communities and thereby reduce the impact of health emergencies on vulnerable populations by using the voluntary sector to respond to emergencies.

The evaluation concluded the project was a success. The project produced the following two key documents: *Voluntary Sector Framework for Health Emergencies*, [www.redcross.ca/cmslib/general/vs\\_framework\\_for\\_he\\_2nd\\_edition\\_en.pdf](http://www.redcross.ca/cmslib/general/vs_framework_for_he_2nd_edition_en.pdf) and *Maintaining the Passion: Sustaining the Emergency Response Episodic Volunteer*, [www.redcross.ca/cmslib/general/crc\\_disastermanagement\\_maintaining\\_e.pdf](http://www.redcross.ca/cmslib/general/crc_disastermanagement_maintaining_e.pdf)

## Disaster Recovery Research Group

The University of Calgary’s Faculty of Social Work under the direction of Lorne Jacques has established a *Disaster Recovery Research Group*. This collaborative interdisciplinary group draws interested members from across the university campus and from the larger community of Calgary. Its focus is to promote research and education into disaster management with an emphasis on disaster recovery. Its Web site was created through NING (a program to form groups on the Internet) and provides a forum to share ideas, activities and conferences specific to its mission. One of the ongoing items of discussion has been the development of a disaster course for students on campus. [www.drrgroup.ning.com/?xgi=dxZZRNT](http://www.drrgroup.ning.com/?xgi=dxZZRNT) ♦

## News from the International Front

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### Dave Hutton—On the Move

Our friend and colleague, Dave Hutton, Centre for Emergency Preparedness and Response, PHAC, has accepted an assignment in Israel with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). The UNRWA is a relief and human development agency that provides education, health care, social services and emergency aid to over 4.6 million refugees living in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. Dave will remain connected with our work on seniors and emergencies while in his new post.

## The Strength of Seniors as Southern Peru Slowly Rebuilds

Luz Barreto from the Social Process Centre (Lima, Peru) shared the following account of the situation for seniors in Peru following the earthquake in August, 2007 (translated from Spanish).

Nineteen months after an earthquake ripped through southern Peru, very little has been done to rebuild homes and the social infrastructure. Help is almost non-existent for the devastated areas. Local governments are hampered by the lack of resources to handle the extensive damage and citizens have had to rebuild their livelihoods themselves. While accompanying the affected seniors in the rural communities of Canete and Lurichincha, Luz observed the impact on seniors and their emotional recovery. Like all victims of the tragedy, they mourned the deaths of their relatives and friends and the loss of their homes. Their homes symbolized their lifelong effort, something they were planning to leave to their children.

Little by little, the seniors started to recover. At first, humanitarian aid from national institutions, international cooperation and supportive citizens made them feel like they were being helped along the way. But as weeks passed, the great show of solidarity waned and their new living conditions became apparent: shortage of food, problems registering as "victims" so they could access rebuilding grants (about \$2,000) from the government, delays in receiving the funds, etc.

Nineteen months after the earthquake, people have become poorer and are still living in makeshift homes where they have to withstand plagues of insects, rodents and changes in the weather resulting in many seniors suffering health problems, especially irritated eyes and bronchial/pulmonary diseases.

Amidst this scenario, seniors are calmly coming to terms with their circumstances. They are indignant at the lack of attention, but in spite of this, have resumed their lives. In some cases, they have benefited from the opportunity to learn new skills and have even organized groups of older persons where none existed previously.

Such is the case of older women from the *Centro Poblado Menor La Quebrada*. It is heartening to see them taking part in communal tasks such as harvesting corn under the scorching sun. They put their full effort into their work, and also take part in parish community activities where they can express their faith. The day the earthquake struck, a mass in honour of their patron saint was being held. They decided to hold the event outside the chapel which was completely destroyed. Parishioners publicly state that they were miraculously saved.

More than 25 older women have learned to make colourful bags from environmentally-friendly products. This has provided a small personal income for them and also funds the club they founded. Older persons meet for celebrations and to share advice on health and to enjoy recreational activities. Their determination in facing life's challenges and discovering that it is possible to keep learning motivates them to forge ahead and come up with new ideas that one day they hope to fulfil.



For more information, contact Luz Barreto, [luxbar1@yahoo.es](mailto:luxbar1@yahoo.es) or go to the following website: [www.derechospersonasmayores.org.pe](http://www.derechospersonasmayores.org.pe) ◇

## Resources and Web sites of Interest

**Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging** – created “Ways to Age Well” for older adults by conducting research and education for professionals working with seniors. This organization offers e-training opportunities including a course called: *PREPARE – How can you prepare your senior living or long term care workforce to handle an emergency or disaster*  
[http://matherlifeways.com/re\\_prepare.asp](http://matherlifeways.com/re_prepare.asp)

**World Health Day 2009 – Save lives. Make hospitals safe in emergencies** –  
On April 7, 2009, the World Health Organization announced *World Health Day* would focus on the safety of health facilities and the readiness of health workers who treat those affected by emergencies and the need to invest in health infrastructure that can withstand hazards and serve people in immediate need.  
[www.who.int/world-health-day/2009/en](http://www.who.int/world-health-day/2009/en)

### It's Your Turn...

Send us your ideas, suggestions and/or information to include in the Autumn edition of the Update. Please feel free to share this e-mail with your contacts who may have an interest in our activities.

### How to Contact Us

For more information about any of the initiatives mentioned above or other inquiries, please contact Patti Gorr at: [Patti\\_Gorr@phac-aspc.gc.ca](mailto:Patti_Gorr@phac-aspc.gc.ca) or 613.957.8901.