

# THE NETWORK FOR AGING RESEARCH

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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

NETWORK FOR AGING  
RESEARCH

## PROGRESS REPORT

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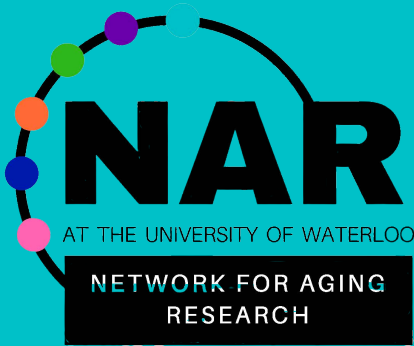
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Since its inception, the University of Waterloo Network for Aging Research (NAR) has supported and expanded interdisciplinary aging-focused research across all six faculties and affiliated colleges at the University of Waterloo (UW). Through NAR, members have access to a catalyst grant program, events related to aging research and networking opportunities.

NAR began in 2014, under the leadership of Founding Director Dr. Steven Mock. Dr. Mock served as Director until 2016, when he was succeeded in this role by Dr. Paul Stolee.

This report provides an update and summary on all NAR-related grants, activities, and events to date.

A total of **107** aging-focused researchers across all **6** Faculties and 2 affiliated colleges

## 301 Total NAR Members

Including researchers, students, community members and other stakeholders.



NAR Website:  
[uwaterloo.ca/network-for-aging-research/](http://uwaterloo.ca/network-for-aging-research/)

## 750+

Total reach through the **NAR Newsletter**

## 1285

**Twitter Followers**



**@NAR\_UW**



*Networks such as NAR are fundamental to enabling the cross-discipline collaboration within and outside the University of Waterloo that takes innovation and research impact to new and exceptional levels.*



# EVENTS

## Conference on Aging, COVID-19 and the Adoption of Health Technology



**March 24 - 25, 2021**

### **University of Waterloo Virtual Conference on Aging, COVID-19 and the Adoption of Health Technology**

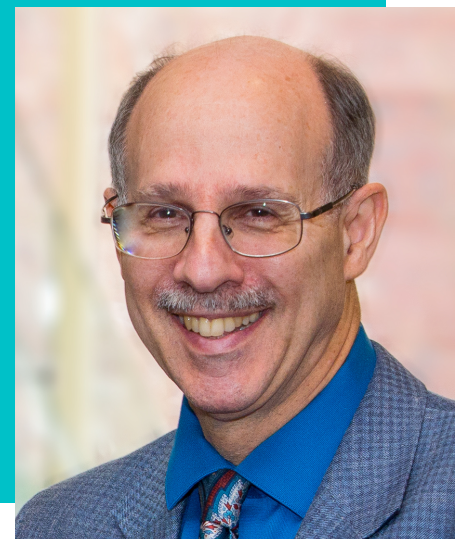
Hosted by NAR, the School of Public Health and Health Systems, and the Centre for Bioengineering and Biotechnology (CBB), this virtual event explored challenges and opportunities of health technology and promoting successful longevity in the world of COVID-19. Speakers included local, national, and international experts discussing the impact of COVID-19 and the adoption of health technology.

In total, the conference had:

- 385 attendees who joined panel and keynote sessions over 2 days
- 21 plenary speakers, networking booths, and sponsor booths.
- 7 poster sessions that were visited over 400 times
- 65 visitors to networking booths led by 9 hosts.
- Discussions of the pan-Canadian and international impacts of COVID-19 on older adults at the most highly attended sessions

The conference featured the 3rd annual William F. Forbes Lecture organized by NAR. This year's lecture was delivered by Professor Neil Charness, who spoke about the promises and limits of technology to support successful longevity. Dr. Charness is the William G. Chase Professor of Psychology and Director, Institute for Successful Longevity, at Florida State University.

Video recordings from the conference are available [here](#).





# WILLIAM F. FORBES LECTURE SERIES

In honour of Professor William F. Forbes, NAR initiated an annual free public lecture series of prominent aging-focused researchers.

Dr. Forbes was the founding Director of the Gerontology program at the University of Waterloo, Canada's first English-language graduate program in Gerontology. He was also the founding president of the Ontario Gerontology Association and the Canadian Association on Gerontology (CAG). In a long and diverse career at the University of Waterloo, he held faculty appointments in the Departments of Chemistry, Sociology, Statistics and Actuarial Science, and Health Studies, and was the Dean of the faculty of Mathematics from 1972-1980.



## **April 6, 2018 - Lecture by Dr. Anne Martin-Matthews**

Dr. Anne Martin-Matthews presented "*A (Self) Reflexive Lens on Gerontology: Over Time, Through Change, In Aging.*" Dr. Martin-Matthews is a leading international scholar in aging, health and society, a Professor of Sociology at UBC and a past Scientific Director of the CIHR Institute of Aging.

The lecture was attended by 114 faculty, staff, students, and community members.



## **June 18, 2019 - Lecture by Dr. Alex Mihailidis**

Dr. Alex Mihailidis is a Professor and the Barbara G. Stymiest Chair in Rehabilitation Technology at the University of Toronto and Toronto Rehab Institute. He is also the co-Scientific Director of the AGE-WELL Network of Centres of Excellence. Dr. Mihailidis presented "*Technology and Aging: Supporting our current and future selves.*"

Over 100 audience members were in attendance. Attendees also learned about new research and innovations from poster presentations and booths.

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\*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 lecture by Dr. Neil Charness was delayed and presented at the 2021 University of Waterloo Virtual Conference on Aging, COVID-19 and the Adoption of Health Technology.

# EVENTS



## Lectures

NAR has supported/sponsored six other public lectures, including presentations by expert researchers such as Dr. Julie Robillard, Dr. Karl Pillemer, Dr. Donna Lero, and others. The lectures covered a range of topics, including aging technologies, opportunities in caregiving, and translation research and aging.



## Symposia

At the **2015 NAR Symposium**, keynote speaker Dr. Donald Stuss discussed key experiences and difficulties that arose during his research projects, with a focus on research involving individuals with traumatic brain injury and frontal lobe damage. Dr. Stuss is the Founding President and Scientific Director of the Ontario Brain Institute. He was joined by several UW researchers who gave short presentations on their aging-focused research projects.



At the **2017 NAR Symposium**, keynote presentations were delivered by Olive Bryanton (then an 80-year old PhD student, now Dr. Bryanton) and the Seniors Helping as Research Partners (SHARP) group. This was followed by a priority setting partnership activity to seek consensus on NAR's research and funding priorities. Attendees had the opportunity to identify and vote on priority areas that are now used to inform NAR research activities and events. The results of the activity are displayed below.

## Research Priorities

- Social Isolation
- Promoting healthy living across the lifespan
- Engagement in research
- Care coordination
- Dementia
- Age-friendly communities
- Support for family and caregivers
- Aging in place
- Communicating findings to knowledge users
- Mobility



# EVENTS

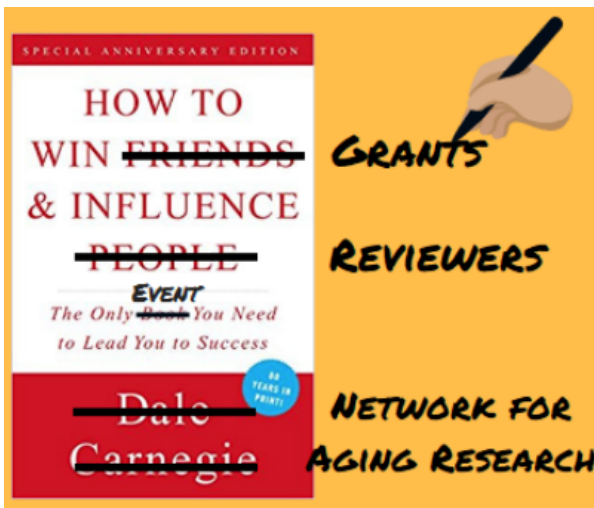


## Lunch 'n' Learns

Since 2017, NAR has hosted four Lunch 'n' Learn presentations to allow aging-focused researchers to showcase their work. NAR provides space, refreshments, and advertising. Applications to present Lunch 'n' Learns can be submitted [here](#).

### Previous Presenters

- *Dr. Monica Maly* - Movement science and boosting physical activity for optimal aging with arthritis
- *Dr. Praveen Nekkar Rao* - Alzheimer's Disease: Novel Treatment Strategies
- *Dr. Jenna Gibbs* - Optimizing body composition and bone strength during aging: An interdisciplinary approach
- *Sarah Wu* - Developmental Evaluation of the CHOICE Program: A Relationship-Centred Mealtime Intervention for Long-Term Care



## Participatory Workshops

NAR has sponsored two participatory workshop events in addition to the priority-setting workshop at the 2017 NAR Symposium (described on the previous page). These workshops invited faculty, staff, and students at the University of Waterloo to discuss various aspects of aging research.

One workshop, titled "*How to win grants and influence reviewers*", provided information and tips on how to incorporate interdisciplinary approaches and knowledge translation methods into grant proposals. This was followed by a competition between groups to develop a research question and corresponding plan based on a NAR priority area. The winning group was awarded a \$2000 prize to support the completion and submission of a grant proposal for the NAR January 2019 Catalyst Grant call.





# FEEDBACK

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*We greatly appreciate the support that the NAR seed funding has provided. The data collected through this pilot study has helped to launch what we hope will be a competitive bid for CIHR operating funds early in the new year.*

- NAR Catalyst Grant recipient

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*The value of NAR has been significant, and given the positive momentum that grows from innovative new collaborations and programs of research, I believe NAR will continue to provide an outstanding return on investment for this university.*

- Dean, Faculty of Engineering

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*NAR plays an important networking role for researchers and students across campus and has provided critical catalyst funds to stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration in research on aging.*

- Dean, Faculty of Arts

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*Bringing information to older adults about making the best of participating in their health care and daily living through technological innovations is very important work. Also, my collaboration with students and researchers to help understand the needs and barriers of aging adults is rewarding. There is more to do and extending funding will move the acquisition of knowledge further.*

- M. A., Community member of Seniors Helping as Research Partners (SHARP) and Network for Aging Research

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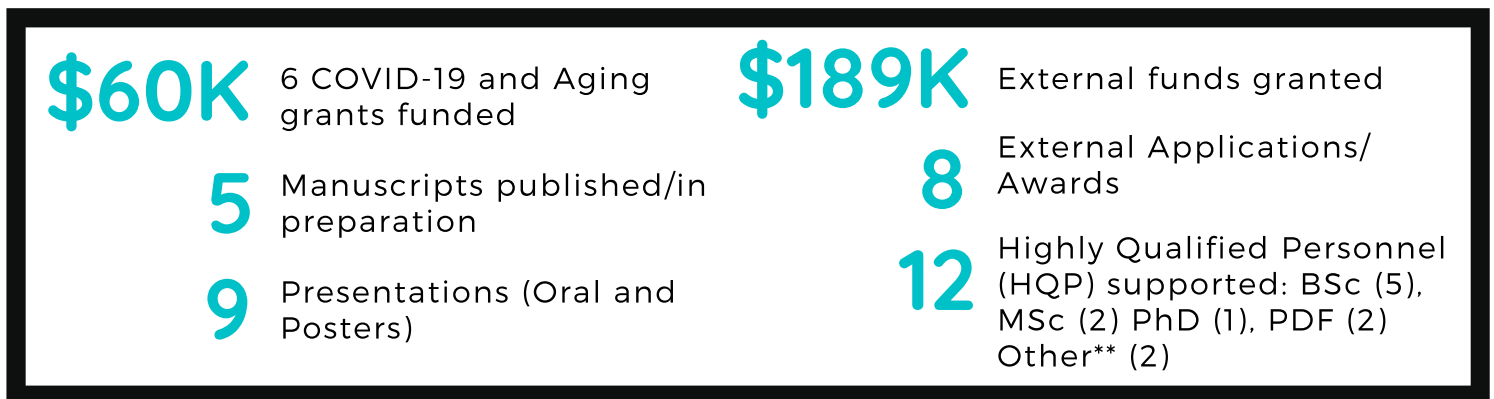
# FUNDING

## Catalyst Grant Spring 2021 **\$50K** 5 grants funded

In Fall 2020, NAR received financial support from all 6 faculties and the Office of Research at University of Waterloo for a total of \$50 000. This enabled NAR to run a catalyst grant call for the period starting in April 2021. Funded projects were submitted by a variety of interdisciplinary researchers, involving investigators from four faculties, three other universities, and two community organizations. Recipients are in the process of writing up their ethics applications, however these may be delayed due to the current pandemic. They will receive their funds once they have ethics clearance.

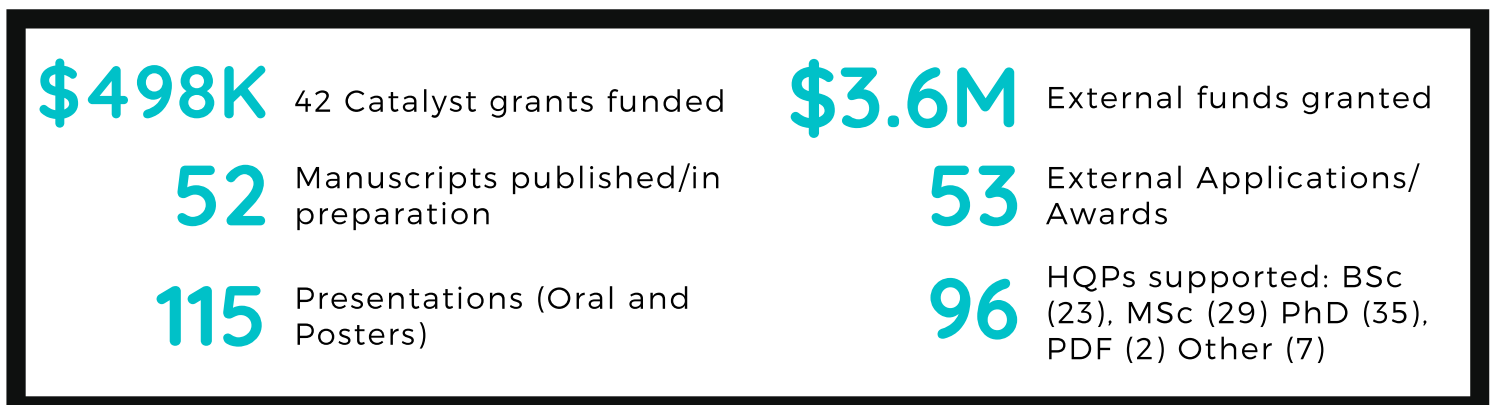
## COVID-19 and Aging Catalyst Grant 2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NAR provided a rapid request for proposals related to COVID-19 and older adults. This rapid turnaround call featured a simplified application process, short response time and an expedited review process.



*\*These numbers are based on the interim outcomes of 4 of 6 projects. These numbers will continue to increase as we receive updates and final reports from all funded projects. \*\*Staff members*

## Previous Catalyst Grants (2015-2019)



“Certainly, for myself, my trainees, and my collaborators, NAR has sparked and significantly accelerated our research – I am confident I’m not alone in this.

- NAR Researcher

\*A full list of all NAR-funded grants is included in Appendix A.

# SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS



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*I was also a Co-Principal Investigator on a NAR seed grant, a role which is often unheard of at the PhD level. This funding enabled an opportunity to bring together very different kinds of expertise and has resulted in some fascinating findings that we continue to build on. Without the support of NAR – I can honestly say that my PhD journey would not have been nearly as rewarding and rich as it was.*

- Faculty of Environment PhD Student ('20)

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## Symposium on Aging Research

The Symposium on Aging Research (SoAR) is an annual, NAR-supported, student-run conference where students share their research through poster and oral presentations and network with other researchers. NAR has dedicated \$4800 over three years to sponsor the event and provide prizes for the best presentations. SoAR 2021 is currently in the early stages of planning, led by Karen El-Hajj, who is also a Student Representative for the Canadian Association on Gerontology Student Connection.

## Speed Networking (2018 and 2019)

NAR partnered with the SoAR group to provide \$2500 in funding to host two winter speed networking events for students and faculty.

During these events, students were offered networking workshops, free professional headshots, and speed/open networking.

and 9 other HQP.

Students engaged in valuable training opportunities and had opportunities to get involved in all aspects of research, including conceptualization and study design, data collection, data analysis, manuscript preparation, and other forms of dissemination. Many students received prestigious awards and grants related to their involvement, including honours such as the CIHR Doctoral Research Award (\$105 000), the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (\$5000), the NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award (\$4500), and others.



# PARTNERSHIPS

Strong partnerships have been developed between NAR and:

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
- Seniors Helping as Research Partners (SHARP)
- Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging (RIA)
- Grand River Hospital
- Centre for Bioengineering and Biotechnology (CBB)

## CIHR RESEARCH CENTRES ON AGING

CIHR has regular meetings with Research Centres on Aging across Canada. From the University of Waterloo, both NAR and the RIA are represented at these meetings. This offers NAR a unique opportunity to improve the visibility of research on aging at UW, and to be part of a national conversation on priorities for aging-related research.

## SCHLEGEL-UW RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR AGING



The University of Waterloo's NAR provides important networking and funding opportunities to its members, including many individuals from the RIA, with broad impact and benefit. RIA staff and scientists have sat on the NAR advisory board, participated in education events, networked with a range of stakeholders, and received funding for grant proposals. Five NAR researchers hold Schlegel Research Chairs.

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*The very complementary nature of our groups' approaches to solving these issues and improving the life and health of our older adults is a necessary element for the greatest progress and impact.*

- Executive Director, RIA

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## SENIORS HELPING AS RESEARCH PARTNERS

The Seniors Helping as Research Partners (SHARP) group is an engaged group of older adults and caregivers who are interested in partnering with health researchers in a wide variety of ways. SHARP members are committed to ensuring that their voices are heard, and their perspectives are shared with researchers who study issues of importance to older adults.