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# “Ontario’s Invisible Workforce: Examining the Relationship between Health Support Workers’ Work Environments, Attitudes and Outcomes”

## Seminar Presentation

In Canada, Health Support Workers (HSWs) are increasingly important for delivering care to vulnerable older people in their homes and communities (Faul et al., 2010; Boris & Klein, 2006), and in long-term care facilities and nursing homes (Castle, 2008). HSWs are a significant component of the Canadian health care labour force. Around 100,000 unregulated HSWs work in the Province of Ontario, most in long term care (LTC) (57%) and home and community care (HCC) (34%) where they provide up to 80% of the direct care to residents and clients (Lum et al., 2010). Despite their importance in elder care, as a workforce, HSWs have received little research attention compared to the regulated professions (Crown et al., 1995). We therefore know little about their work environments, how their work is structured, and how their work relates to that of other care providers. We have few insights into what factors influence their work attitudes, including job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational commitment, and the quality of their work life, and how these influence work outcomes like performance, the quality of care provided, and turnover. This presentation reports preliminary analyses of data collected in our *HSW Worklife Survey* over Summer 2015, designed to address the questions:

- What are the demographic, work environment, and job characteristics of HSWs working in Ontario’s HCC and LTC sectors?
- How do these characteristics differ within, and across, sectors?
- How do they relate to HSWs’ work attitudes and work outcomes?
- How do these relationships differ within, and across, sectors?

Our findings will inform the development of health human resources strategy options for Part 2 of our project, and add to wider empirical knowledge about this workforce, a knowledge gap which has, until now, limited our ability to build evidence-based approaches to HHR planning.

Ginsburg L, Berta W, Baumbusch J, Rohit Dass A, Laporte A, Reid RC, Squires J, Taylor D (2015). Measuring Work Engagement, Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Citizenship Behavior among Health Care Aides, *The Gerontologist*, Forthcoming.

Berta W, Laporte A, Deber R, Baumann A, Gamble B (2013) The evolving role of health care aides in the long-term care and home and community care sectors in Canada, *Human Resources for Health* 2013, 11:25 (14 June 2013)

<http://www.human-resources-health.com/content/11/1/25>

## Brief Biography

Whitney Berta is an Associate Professor of Health Services Organization and Management with the IHPME, University of Toronto. Her research interests are in organizational learning/learning capacity and knowledge transfer, and their relationships to organizational performance. Much of her work focuses on elder care, specifically that provided in the institutional long-term care sector.

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