



Centre de recherche  
sur le vieillissement  
Research Centre on Aging

# Encrâge

**NEWSLETTER**

On current research projects



Fall  
2025

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Word from the Executive Office .....	4
Social Participation: a Source of Richness for Older Adults and Communities .....	5
Alzheimer’s: What If Omega-3 was the Key? .....	7
Being a Member of the Seniors’ Committee: Creating Opening, Connections, and Evolution .....	8
Physical Exercise: A Fire Extinguisher for Cancer-Related Fatigue .....	9
Relieving Chronic Pain in Older Adults: Beyond Medication-Based Approaches .....	10
Carte blanche to Diane Lesage   A Positive Image of Old Age .....	11
Shaping Your Home: EMiliA, a Tool for Building the Future .....	12
Long COVID: Regaining my Abilities One Step at a Time .....	13
Tribute to Jean-Marc Beaudoin — Member of the Seniors’ Committee....	14
MOVE – En Équilibre: Videos to Help You Stay Balanced While Moving....	15
AQDR Sherbrooke et Région: An invitation to reflect and take action for your future .....	16
Hints from Our Memory on the Tip of Our Tongue .....	17
Four Women Aged 66 to 75 Reach Everest Base Camp! .....	18
Testimony of Jocelyne Gatién—Research Participant .....	20
From Intention to Action to Get More Active: How About We Take Inspiration From Your Best Tofu Recipe to Achieve This?.....	21
Research on Aging Is Ageless! .....	22

## A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that we present this new edition of Encrêge, reflecting our commitment to promoting a positive and inspiring vision of aging.

In this issue, we want to transform the perception of aging by associating it with vitality and self-discovery. We share four testimonials from older adults who continue to grow and flourish with age. Whether through involvement, the fulfillment of dreams, or boldness in the face of risk, their stories show that the richness of aging lies in sharing and passing on knowledge. They offer us an important message: it’s never too late.

We also offer concrete strategies to support fulfilling aging. You will discover promising scientific advances in the field of aging, including:

- transcranial stimulation to improve chronic pain management,
- physical exercise to improve response to chemotherapy treatments,
- an intergenerational project to raise awareness of environmental issues.

As we age, we have the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to our society. We hope this issue will inspire you to reflect, share, and recognize the beauty and richness that each stage of life can bring.

**Thank you for being part of this wonderful adventure!**

**KARL FERNANDES AND ELÉONOR RIESCO,**  
SCIENTIFIC CO-DIRECTORS



# SOCIAL PARTICIPATION: A SOURCE OF RICHNESS FOR OLDER ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

By **Stéphanie Meynet**, postdoctoral researcher, and **Mélanie Levasseur**, researcher

Social participation means getting involved in activities that are meaningful to you, such as volunteering, leisure activities, or community life. Beneficial to health and well-being, social participation promotes social cohesion, strengthens intergenerational dialogue, and helps build supportive and sustainable communities.

## The importance of social participation for older adults

By promoting the creation and maintenance of relationships with others, social participation is an important factor in health, as essential as air or food. Studies show that older adults who take part in social activities are more likely to live longer and healthier lives. They therefore reduce the risks of isolation, enjoy a better quality of life, and remain independent for longer.

Furthermore, their experience is a valuable resource for communities. Thanks to the skills, knowledge, and values acquired over the years, older adults can pass on a precious legacy to all generations. The desire to share this legacy, known as the generativity process, strengthens intergenerational ties and helps build more cohesive communities.

## The Génération Réunies pour l'Environnement program: an opportunity for social participation

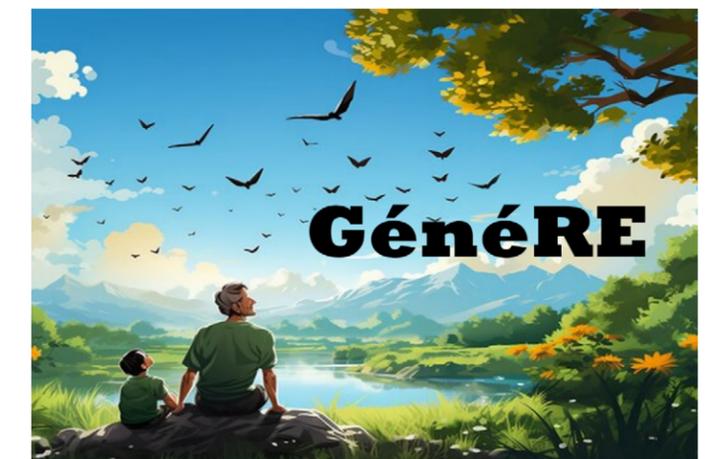
While commitment to the environment is essential to ensuring quality of life for all generations, recent studies have revealed that older adults often associate their desire to preserve the environment with their desire to pass on a better future to their children, grandchildren, or those around them. Inspired by the Retirees in Service to the Environment program and developed at the Research Center on Aging, the Génération Réunies pour l'Environnement (GénéRE) program aims to promote

engagement in environmental volunteering by offering a central role to two generations that are too often sidelined in the climate change movement: young people and older adults.

The GénéRE program will be implemented in early 2026 at the Maison des Grands-Parents in Sherbrooke and the Cégep of Drummondville. The concept is simple: the two generations will attend educational workshops together on communication, recognizing reliable sources and values in climate change, as well as local environmental issues, in order to develop an environmental project in their community.

Participating in GénéRE is much more than a volunteer commitment: it is an opportunity to receive real training, to become an environmental leader in your community, and to meet passionate experts in the field.

To learn more, watch the segment [Les gardiens de la planète](#) on YouTube (in French).



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## ALZHEIMER'S: WHAT IF OMEGA-3 WAS THE KEY?

By Rana Raffoul, PhD student, and Mélanie Plourde, researcher

We present to you an invisible threat that transforms the lives of older adults into a real maze of confusion and which is no minor consequence of aging. Do you know this daunting enemy? Yes, it is Alzheimer's disease.

### When memories fade: the journey into the fog of Alzheimer's

Imagine that each memory is like a shining star in the universe of your mind. Alzheimer's disease is like a thick fog that begins to extinguish those stars one by one. Suddenly, everything becomes unrecognizable: a family photo turns into a difficult puzzle to solve. It's as if you were in a universe where every day is a new journey... in the fog.

### Why do some people get lost more quickly on this journey?

It's because of the travel guide for this journey, called APOE, a gene found in some people. People who have the «APOE4» guide are like travelers with a faulty compass, allowing the fog to invade their minds more quickly. But don't panic! Those with the «APOE3» guide have a more reliable compass, which helps keep the fog at bay. Most of us have this APOE3 guide, which seems to be a key to protecting us from this disease.

### Omega-3 and Alzheimer's disease

Did you know that your brain is mainly made up of lipids, including omega-3? So how are omega-3 related to Alzheimer's disease? People with the APOE4 gene seem to have problems with the metabolism of omega-3-type lipids, and as they age, the amount of these lipids decreases in the brain, contributing in part to memory loss.

This is where our research comes in. We conducted experiments on mice carrying APOE4 by feeding them either a diet devoid of omega-3, known as the «control» diet, or a diet rich in omega-3, which began when they were 10 months old, equivalent to about 50 years in humans.

### Omega-3 to the rescue!

Our research reveals the hidden secrets between a diet rich in omega-3 and the prevention of Alzheimer's disease. And guess what? Mice carrying APOE4 showed good memory when they started a diet rich in omega-3, even though it was introduced late in their lives. The good news is that there is a favorable wind to counteract the effects of the «APOE4» guide and clear the fog: omega-3! Taking them every day, even late in life, can help you counteract the fog. By incorporating fish or omega-3 supplements into your diet, you may well clear the fog in your mind and improve your cognitive health!



# BEING A MEMBER OF THE SENIORS' COMMITTEE: CREATING OPENING, CONNECTIONS, AND EVOLUTION

By **Claude Desjardins**, member of the Seniors' Committee, in collaboration with **Katherine Boisvert-Vigneault**, Scientific Development Advisor, and **Caroline Francoeur**, Coordinator of the Laboratoire d'innovation par et pour les aînés

## What Claude Desjardins hopes to bring to the Center for Research on Aging (CdRV)

I am a social sculptor and an older adult committed to the human enrichment of my community. For more than eight years now, I have been involved in every way possible with the CdRV. Among other things, I sit on the Seniors' Committee of the Laboratoire d'innovation par et pour les aînés

For me, the word «innovation» refers to a place where all generations, from all backgrounds, both researchers and citizens, can invest their energy in creating, together, new models for the future of the world... which I care about.

As a social sculptor, it is my role to chart the path that will bring together our differences, our scientific knowledge and our experiential knowledge, in order to build a unique collective sculpture. This encounter allows us to awaken to as yet unknown forms that will humanize our lives.



Claude Desjardins has been involved for more than eight years at the Research Center on Aging

## Daring to take the risk

This is how I collaborate: I take the risk of standing up and saying what I see and what I feel. I contribute in my own way, by giving the best of myself, so that we can set out together on a path that allows us to build ourselves as «living sculptures» as human beings. This is how I journey through each day. Each step forward, anchored in the present, allows me to advance in my quest for freedom and to fully savor what it transforms in me and around me!

## Daring to transform our thinking

As a member of the Seniors' Committee and a research partner, Claude helps find innovative solutions to better meet the needs of older adults.

She encourages us to build bridges between generations and people from different backgrounds. In doing so, she influences our work habits and ways of thinking, leading us to think differently.

Thanks to Claude's determination and willpower, we have challenged certain practices, which has allowed us to innovate and adopt new approaches. Through her authentic and bold reflections, Claude encourages us to embrace contradictions in order to create something new.

By daring to think and act differently, Claude has allowed us to discover the beauty of the human spirit that drives our work. As she so aptly puts it, «We are all someone's elder.» We must not let age guide our thinking, but rather draw inspiration from our experiences to better understand and enrich our personal and professional lives. Claude teaches us to let our creative potential emerge, as long as we are willing to allow ourselves to be transformed by the experiences of others.

# PHYSICAL EXERCISE: A FIRE EXTINGUISHER FOR CANCER-RELATED FATIGUE

By **Adeline Fontvieille**, PhD student, **Hugo Parent-Roberge**, research professional, and **Eléonor Riesco**, researcher

Cancer-related fatigue is a bit like a fire that starts but never completely goes out. During chemotherapy treatments, this fire becomes a heavy burden to manage, affecting not only the body but also cognitive and mental dimensions. Unfortunately, there is still no simple way to extinguish this fire, as the exact mechanisms behind this phenomenon remain unclear.

However, a simple but powerful solution seems to work well: physical exercise. Imagine exercise as a fire extinguisher that helps control this fire, making it less intense after each treatment, allowing people with cancer to regain a little more energy and improve their quality of life.

## The mechanisms at play

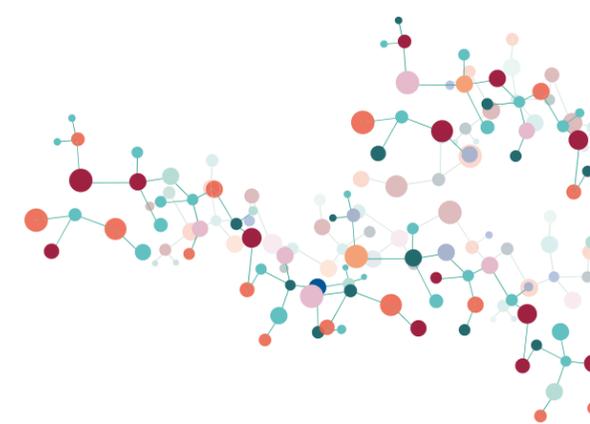
Why does it work? That's the big question. Research is trying to understand the physiological responses that occur within the body in order to optimize this strategy. Chemotherapy can be thought of as a process that ignites several fires or systems in the body: the inflammatory system, which becomes inflamed in response to infections and injuries; the immune system, which acts as a barrier to protect us from disease; and the hormonal system, which regulates reactions such as stress.

First, chemotherapy weakens the immune system, causing chronic inflammation, like a fire that burns continuously. This poorly controlled fire eventually affects other parts of the body, including the nervous system. This inflammation spreads to the brain, much like toxic smoke that disperses and causes further damage. This damage may explain why cancer-related fatigue also affects mental and cognitive functioning. Finally, chemotherapy stimulates the production of cortisol, the stress hormone, which acts like a fan, further fanning the flames and making them more difficult to extinguish. Ultimately, these three systems— inflammatory, immune, and hormonal—burn continuously and feed off each other, creating a vicious cycle that prevents the fire from being completely extinguished.

## Controlling fatigue through exercise

In this context, physical exercise acts as a fire extinguisher that helps control these various fires. It reduces inflammation, soothes the effects of stress, and helps the body regain a certain balance. Little by little, by reducing the intensity of these fires and dispersing the smoke, exercise helps reduce feelings of fatigue and restore energy. Thus, a better understanding of these mechanisms could help refine recommendations on exercise during cancer treatment by finding the best «dose» of exercise for each person. It will also be important to tailor these recommendations to the type of cancer and treatment so that each person can benefit from the right exercise program.

Ultimately, physical exercise is a valuable tool in helping users better manage the effects of chemotherapy. By continuing to improve our understanding of the biological mechanisms behind this fatigue, we will be able to refine strategies to offer them lasting relief and improve their quality of life.



# RELIEVING CHRONIC PAIN IN OLDER ADULTS: BEYOND MEDICATION-BASED APPROACHES

By **Guillaume Léonard**, researcher

Chronic pain is pain that persists over time, beyond the normal healing period. Unlike acute pain, chronic pain has no beneficial role. It affects the person's daily life of the person, preventing them from performing their tasks and reducing their quality of life. In most cases, medication remains the first-line treatment, but it has limitations that justify the adoption of complementary non-drug strategies.

Combining drug and non-drug approaches maximizes pain relief and reduces the adverse effects of medication. These benefits are particularly attractive for older adults, a segment of the population that is often affected by chronic pain and sensitive to the adverse effects of medication.

## Stimulating the brain: a promising approach to pain relief

The research team led by Guillaume Léonard, full professor at the School of Rehabilitation and researcher at the CdRV, is interested in these non-drug approaches and their potential benefits for improving the care of older adults suffering from chronic pain. In one of its projects, his team is looking at transcranial stimulation—a new approach that stimulates certain areas of the brain using electrodes placed on the scalp.

Professor Léonard's research team evaluated the effectiveness of this treatment by recruiting older adults between the ages of 60 and 84 who suffer from chronic pain. These participants were randomly divided into two groups: one that received the actual stimulation (real treatment), while the other received simulated stimulation (placebo treatment).

## Clinical trials

To date, transcranial stimulation treatment has been shown to reduce pain, relieve symptoms of depression and anxiety, and improve the quality of life of older adults living with chronic pain. These results have laid the groundwork for another study involving people aged 65 and older suffering from chronic pain.

In this latest study, participants receive transcranial stimulation treatments in a clinic, administered by physiotherapists, rather than at the research center. This approach brings the study closer to real-world conditions, allowing for a more accurate assessment of the potential

benefits. Ultimately, the research team wants to determine whether actual transcranial stimulation is more effective than placebo treatment in a clinical setting and identify the individuals most likely to respond to this type of treatment.

The team's work clearly illustrates the potential of non-drug approaches, such as transcranial stimulation, to relieve chronic pain in older adults. This research opens up new possibilities for improving the quality of life of these individuals.

One thing is certain: it is not normal to suffer as we age. Healthcare professionals now have several strategies, both drug-based and non-

drug-based, to reduce pain and improve quality of life, including for older adults.

Listen on YouTube: [a podcast to learn more about pain management in older adults](#) (in French)



A member of the research team tests transcranial stimulation.

# CARTE BLANCHE

In this section, we give a voice to Diane Lesage, who shares her positive vision of aging—an invitation to see the passing years as a treasure to be cultivated!

By **Diane Lesage**, a long-time advocate for people's well-being and currently involved as a citizen with the Research Center on Aging.

## A Positive Image of Old

Some older adults are «exceptional.» They can do things like snowboard at 65, go on adventure trips beyond 70-75, or play tennis at 80. They seem to be in perfect health and will undoubtedly live to be centenarians. That's a treasure. We cannot blame them for enjoying it.

Highlighting these people who are «the exception» identifies them as examples of aging well. They are role models to follow in order to avoid the vulnerabilities, slowdowns, and eventual illnesses associated with old age. Yet these conditions are a reality for most of us. Perfect health is not the goal of life, but rather a resource for life.

In my opinion, a positive image of aging must recognize everyone's right to be themselves, without necessarily having to be a super senior\*. We can feel alive and well despite a decline in our physical abilities. The wealth we have at our disposal to achieve this is time. Freed from professional responsibilities, family obligations, and other commitments of «active» life, we have the time to continue to evolve toward greater self-fulfillment. Accepting aging is a positive and calming attitude that allows us to believe in our ability to adapt and gives us the desire to put it into action.

People around me are a great source of inspiration for finding possible paths to explore in the quest for the richness that can come with fulfilling aging. This is done with respect for our condition and our personalities, while maintaining self-esteem. This can be through volunteering for a cause

that is close to our hearts; being open to creating new relationships or enriching those that are most meaningful to us; joining a group of people with whom we can grow in a space of support, sharing, and transformation; saying yes to the loving kindness that can come at any age; enjoying intergenerational relationships; nurturing our imagination and curiosity through reading; giving ourselves the opportunity to be moved by a greater sensitivity to the beauty of nature, the visual arts, and music; perfecting an art or craft that we are passionate about; staying active in comfort and safety by doing physical activities that suit us and that we enjoy; paying attention to our overall health to stay in the best possible condition for as long as possible. This is an open list...

Old age is a time when pleasure, comfort, and gentleness are all legitimate without compromising our desire to be present to ourselves, others, and life. It is the establishment of a serenity conducive to what will come...

\*Super senior. An expression quoted in the columns of La zone grise by Danielle Ferron, a citizen contributor to the CdRV. La zone grise is a forum for reflection on this stage of life known as retirement and, eventually, old age. It aims to provoke discussion on topics that have an impact on the lives of older people..



## SHAPING YOUR HOME: EMILIA, A TOOL FOR BUILDING THE FUTURE

By Catherine Girard, research coordinator, Dany Baillargeon, researcher, and Nathalie Delli-Colli, researcher

You know every creak in the stairs. The hallways still echo with the laughter of your cousins, friends, children... Then something changes—a sick spouse, the death of a partner, a new baby in the family, the desire to be closer to loved ones—and you ask yourself, «Does this place where I live still meet my needs?»

If the answer seems difficult to identify, it's because every situation regarding where to live is unique and complex. The questions are numerous and varied, to the point of sometimes seeming confusing. What do you want most: waking up to birdsong or evenings spent chatting with your neighbors? What health services are essential to you? Are they currently accessible to you? If you wanted to hire staff to help you with your tasks, could you? The fact that the relevant information is scattered across different platforms doesn't help... But there's good news! A solution is now available online: EMiliA.

EMiliA stands for «Explorer son Milieu de vie Aîné, aujourd'hui et pour l'avenir», meaning exploring your senior living environment, today and for the future. This web-based tool is designed to guide older adults in making decisions about their living environment. It brings together information, audio testimonials, decision-making grids, step-by-step guides for certain stages, and ideas for initiating discussions with loved ones.

### To ease the emotional roller coaster, planning remains the key.

Thinking about one's living environment creates a roller coaster of emotions: uncertainty and excitement, small losses and big victories... EMiliA offers nuanced support, without dramatization or carelessness.

To make this wealth of information easy to digest, EMiliA is divided into three stages, each linked to a specific moment in the home care journey: «at the beginning,» «to leave or to stay?» and «where to go?» The content explores 17 themes, ranging from pragmatic to more emotional topics.



Examples? Tax credits that make it easier to stay at home are accompanied by exercises to clarify your personal definition of home. Tips for taking inventory of your belongings are accompanied by suggestions for discussing your dreams and desires with your loved ones.

Like a good dessert, EMiliA is best enjoyed in small bites. The 17 themes facilitate a gentle discovery, either alone or with loved ones, as needs and questions arise. It can be the perfect excuse to plan group discussions around a theme that everyone can relate to.

The result is EMiliA, a comprehensive, user-friendly tool built by and for older adults. Because shaping your home is a project for the future, which takes shape one question, one decision, and one action at a time. Every step is precious!

Discover EMiliA: [outilemilia.ca](http://outilemilia.ca)

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12



## LONG COVID: REGAINING MY ABILITIES ONE STEP AT A TIME

By Sarah-Eve Lord, master's student, Marie-Noëlle Fontaine, master's student, and Isabelle Dionne, researcher

I have an appointment on Monday morning at 9 a.m. In my bag, I have a bottle of water and sneakers, which I was asked to bring for physical tests. I dread the effects on my already tired body, exhausted by this post-COVID-19 syndrome that has been going on for several months now. My life was turned upside down when strange symptoms appeared after I caught COVID-19. Even the smallest activities became difficult for my body. Walking for long periods of time became painful, and I am no longer able to go grocery shopping alone or vacuum my apartment.

I arrived in the lobby of the Research Center on Aging for my appointment, where a smiling woman came to meet me. «My name is Marie-Noëlle! Nice to meet you! Shall we go up to the 5th floor?» she asked me.

She explained in detail the research project I would be participating in. For eight weeks, I would come here three times a week to train. Today's physical tests would be repeated to assess whether my condition had changed after training. I wonder if I will be able to do it, but I am told that the program will be adapted to my ability. I am asked to fill out questionnaires about the symptoms that have been bothering me for weeks and disrupting my daily life: fatigue, headaches, difficulty concentrating... The list is long.

The physical tests go well. Marie-Noëlle has me stand up and sit down quickly, asks me to squeeze an instrument as hard as I can with one hand, and has me walk down the hallway for six minutes. I go at my own pace and manage to do everything.

When I show up for my first training session, Marie-Noëlle has me walk on a treadmill for five minutes. She tells me that we will slowly increase the duration and intensity over the weeks. She explains the scale of 1 to 10 that I will use to express the intensity I feel and that, for now, we don't want to exceed 3/10 to avoid a resurgence of symptoms. Following Marie-Noëlle's instructions regarding intensity, I am surprised to find that I am able to complete the entire workout. She then shows me exercises using elastic bands and my body weight and adjusts them for me so that I can do them properly.

During the first month, we take the time to adjust the intensity if my daily fatigue requires it. When I feel more tired on a given day, we always respect my capacity. But I'm improving! I walk longer and a little faster. I lift slightly heavier weights. Marie-Noëlle points out my progress, but she still insists that I do not go too fast. We take it slowly, not exceeding 4/10 in intensity.

Eight weeks go by. I feel stronger. I can lift my grocery bags and mow the lawn. I do the physical tests again and I'm sure I've improved. Thanks to exercise, I feel better!

### A comic strip

The jury awarded this text first prize for the CdRV outreach by comic strip contest in collaboration with Québec Sciences and cartoonist Martin Patenaude-Monette. You can read the result of this collaboration online: [quebecscience.qc.ca/sante/raconter-veillissement-bede-2025](http://quebecscience.qc.ca/sante/raconter-veillissement-bede-2025).



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13

# TRIBUTE TO JEAN-MARC BEAUDOIN — MEMBER OF THE SENIORS' COMMITTEE

Recipient of the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec Medal — 2025

Jean-Marc Beaudoin is now 67 years old. He has a degree in urban planning and has designed residential and commercial developments for much of his career. While working for the City of Sherbrooke, sensitive to the importance of citizen consultation and collaboration, he designed parks, green spaces, and public squares using a citizen-led and citizen-involved approach.

Multiple sclerosis forced him into early retirement. However, he is no less active! He has learned to develop his resilience, which is based on his ability to face the situation head-on, to see what is still present and positive in his life, and to put this wealth at the service of those around him. This resilience allows him to learn from the difficult situations he goes through and use them as a springboard to other challenges. In confidence, he will tell you, «When I was an urban planner, if I had known what it was like to have reduced mobility, I would have designed public spaces differently! I would have done better.» So he used his experience with illness to design adapted apartment plans for wheelchair users and adapted his own living space.

To feel alive and useful, he seeks to do good around him, to always do better, as he says. He volunteers with the Réseau des amis de Sherbrooke, which helps socially isolated older adults. He is also involved with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. Since spring 2019, he has been collaborating on research on aging as a member of the Seniors' Committee at the CdRV's Laboratoire par et pour les aînés. In this capacity, he contributes to the dialogue between the scientific community and the elderly populations targeted by the research. He encourages the inclusion of the most vulnerable older adults so that they can benefit from interventions and innovations that are truly appropriate for them.



Quebec Lieutenant Governor Manon Jeannotte, accompanied by Jean-Marc Beaudoin

Several research teams have sought his collaboration on their steering committees, where he acts as a partner and expert based on his lived experience. This type of involvement in the ideation and design of research projects allows him to work with scientific experts and enrich the discussion with his experiential knowledge, rigor, and sensitivity to people who are lonely or losing their independence, so that research can lead to solutions that are better suited to populations that are often misunderstood. For example, in the fall of 2023, the CdRV launched a mobile research unit that takes research out of the laboratory and into the communities of older adults who are unable to travel. Jean-Marc helped make this unit a functional space that is fully accessible to people who use walking aids. He also collaborates on research into chronic pain to enable the creation and adoption of effective, drug-free pain management strategies that will allow people with chronic pain to move without fear of pain and regain a meaningful quality of life.

Since 2021, he has been a member of the Advisory Council on Aging at the Institute of Aging of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. This mandate allows him to comment, on behalf of Quebec older adults, on funding priorities for research dedicated to aging well.

Despite his many efforts to create a better world and a more inclusive environment, Jean-Marc remains a man of heart, filled with tenderness, gratitude, and admiration for his partner, children, and grandchildren.

# MOVE – EN ÉQUILIBRE: VIDEOS TO HELP YOU STAY BALANCED WHILE MOVING!

By Isabelle Dionne, researcher

What if a few minutes of exercise a day were enough to prevent falls? That's the challenge taken up by MOVE — En équilibre, a series of 12 exercise sessions designed specifically for older adults. This project, born out of a collaboration between researcher Isabelle Dionne of the CdRV, Danielle Bouchard of the University of New Brunswick, and the organization Sercovie, aims to make fall prevention accessible while considering the diversity of older adults' physical conditions.

## A program rooted in science... and reality

Based on the latest scientific data, these video clips offer simple exercises adapted to all fitness levels. Whether you are very active or are beginning to experience a loss of stability, MOVE — En équilibre allows you to effectively work on your balance to prevent age-related loss.

The scientific recommendations are indisputable: to prevent falls, you need to do at least three hours of targeted exercise per week, all year round. However, less than 6% of programs offered in Canada meet these recommendations. MOVE — En équilibre fills this gap with a solution that is accessible anytime, anywhere.

## A free tool accessible to all

The program includes 12 video clips, available online for free and divided into three blocks according to physical condition. Each session offers a complete exercise routine that combines flexibility, balance, and muscle strengthening exercises.



«Since I've been doing the program, I no longer need to use my arms to get up from a chair! It made me realize that with daily exercise, I can regain my abilities!» — Pauline Dumoulin, citizen and member of the CdRV Seniors' Committee

MOVE — En équilibre is more than an exercise program: it's an invitation to regain control over your stability and balance in the comfort of your own home. Because it's never too early—or too late—to keep your balance in motion.

Check out the online videos: [move50plus.ca/en/move-in-balance/](https://move50plus.ca/en/move-in-balance/).



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# AQDR SHERBROOKE ET RÉGION: AN INVITATION TO REFLECT AND TAKE ACTION FOR YOUR FUTURE

By **Isabelle Guérard**, Director of the Quebec Association for the Defense of the Rights of Retired and Pre-retired Persons in Sherbrooke and Region (AQDR), and **Marie Toupin**, creator and facilitator

What if aging were an opportunity to rediscover yourself, take on new challenges, and make your dreams come true? This is the perspective offered by the third season of *Pensez plus tôt à plus tard* (Think about later sooner), a series of programs designed by the AQDR Sherbrooke et région in collaboration with researchers from the CdRV. Immerse yourself in inspiring discussions that highlight the essential role of older adults in society and explore concrete ways to shape your future in your own image.

## Pensez plus tôt à plus tard: concrete tools to inform your choices

For 35 years, AQDR Sherbrooke et région has been committed to informing, supporting, and defending the rights of people aged 50 and over. With more than 700 members, it offers workshops, conferences, and personalized support, in addition to working with decision-makers to promote social change.

To support people aged 50 and over in their reflections and decisions as they age, AQDR Sherbrooke and region has developed the *Pensez plus tôt à plus tard* program. On their website, [pensezplustot.org](https://pensezplustot.org), you can find information and brochures on eight key topics, such as second careers, housing, social participation, and old age, as well as three seasons of programs also broadcast on MAtv Sherbrooke.

## A third season dedicated to reflection

The three seasons of *Pensez plus tôt à plus tard* are dedicated to aging well, planning ahead, and the importance of thinking ahead about all stages of aging. In the third season, we take a closer look at how to value the journey and contribution of older adults to society, discuss the obstacles and opportunities for staying active and engaged, and explore how to shape to your plans and aspirations, regardless of age.

For example, with researcher Mélanie Levasseur, you can reflect on how age influences self-perception and discover practices for cultivating strong self-esteem throughout the aging process. With researcher Samuèle Rémillard-Boilard, you will find food for thought on how to improve the welcome given to older adults in our public spaces and how they can fully occupy their place there.

With researcher Stéphanie Meynet, explore the intergenerational initiative «Les gardiens de la planète» (Guardians of the Planet), in which older adults become knowledge transferors and conservators of the future with young people.

Season 3 is now available on MAtv and online at [pensezplustot.org](https://pensezplustot.org).



Marie Toupin and Isabelle Guérard, leaders of the *Pensez plus tôt à plus tard* Program

## A valuable collaboration with the CdRV

To provide you with reliable and relevant information, AQDR Sherbrooke et région collaborates with the CdRV. Thanks to the expertise of its researchers, the content of the *Pensez plus tôt à plus tard* episodes is based on evidence and scientific data. This partnership allows us to address the challenges of aging with rigor and humanity, offering you concrete ideas to enrich your daily life.

The *Pensez plus tôt à plus tard* programs demonstrate the crucial importance of preparing for the future in order to enjoy every moment of your life and remain in control of it. Because every choice counts, let's make sure your future reflects who you are!

To learn more about AQDR Sherbrooke et région: [aqdrsherbrooke.org/](https://aqdrsherbrooke.org/)

# HINTS FROM OUR MEMORY ON THE TIP OF OUR TONGUE

By **Tamàs Fülöp**, researcher, and **Mélissa Lessard-Beaudoin**, research professional

## An intruder in the brain

If I told you that what happens in your mouth could say a lot about your brain, would you believe me? Surprising, but true! This connection is being studied more and more by the scientific community. It was long believed that infections in the mouth remained isolated there. However, if left untreated, these bacteria can travel inside the body and end up in unexpected places. One of the bacteria responsible for gingivitis has been found in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease.

## Defending against this bacterium

The bodies of people with Alzheimer's disease may not be able to defend themselves against these bacteria in the same way. This is because pro-inflammatory markers are reduced in Alzheimer's disease. In a way, the signal that warns the body of the presence of the bacteria and tells it to defend itself is less effective. This weakened signal may allow infections to spread more easily.

## Understanding the link between gum infection and memory

Several questions remain. Is this reduction in our body's response to infection present before Alzheimer's disease develops? Are some people predisposed to developing gum disease? What impact do these infections have on our memory?

To answer these questions, Dr. Tamàs Fülöp's team is currently conducting a study to better understand the link between gum disease and memory, which could help prevent Alzheimer's disease more effectively.

## Participate in the research

Are you slightly concerned about your memory, or do you have memory problems and want to participate in research? Dr. Tamàs Fülöp's team is currently recruiting people aged 65 and over. You do not need to have gum disease to participate.

This study includes an evaluation of your gum health by a dentist, memory tests, and blood, saliva, and urine samples.

You can contact **Mélissa Lessard-Beaudoin** at:

- [Melissa.Lessard-Beaudoin@USherbrooke.ca](mailto:Melissa.Lessard-Beaudoin@USherbrooke.ca)
- 819-780-2220, ext. 46269



# FOUR WOMEN AGED 66 TO 75 REACHED EVEREST BASE CAMP!

## Have you heard about this ambitious project from the Research Center on Aging?

This is an interdisciplinary study on aging, initiated by Eléonor Riesco, researcher and scientific co-director of the CdRV and professor at the Faculty of Physical Activity Sciences at the University of Sherbrooke. She had been considering such a project for several years. With this research, she wants to demonstrate that aging itself does not prevent people from surpassing themselves and taking on major challenges. This project will help combat ageism stereotypes by showing that, with adequate preparation, older adults are just as capable of taking on challenges that instinctively might seem reserved for younger people.

To promote a positive view of aging and show that getting older doesn't stop you from pushing your limits, Eléonor Riesco and her team picked four participants between the ages of 66 and 75. Their challenge: reach the base camp of the world's highest mountain!

After an initial assessment of their physical condition and medical eligibility, the participants prepared for several months for this expedition. Supervised by a kinesiologist, they underwent progressive training aimed at improving their muscular and cardiorespiratory endurance. Thanks to the team psychologist, the participants and the entire research team also benefited from training to prepare them for the culture shock of traveling to a country whose customs and reality are so different from our own.

On November 13, 2024, Réjeanne Tremblay, Bernadette Veronneau, Jocelyne Gatien, and Jocelyne Picotin achieved this feat! These four residents of the Eastern Townships reached Everest Base Camp at an altitude of 5,364 meters!

## Daily measurements taken to evaluate the participants

The researchers involved in the Mount Everest project were interested in the physical and cognitive abilities of

aging people and their ability to adapt to new experiences and challenges in a context where their limits are pushed. To analyze this data, the research team conducted several tests, measurements, and observations throughout the expedition: altitude tolerance, cardiac activity, lung function, energy expenditure, cognitive abilities (memory, decision-making speed, etc.), sleep quality, psychological state, and cultural adaptation. In addition, each day, the participants had to keep a personal logbook.

Once analyzed, all these data will enable the research team to improve scientific knowledge about the adaptability of older adults in all affected areas.

## What a challenge this expedition is!

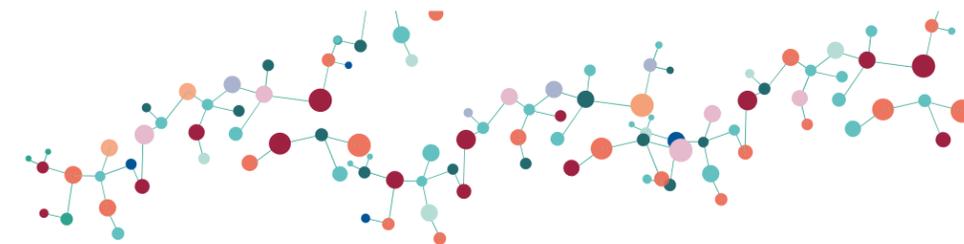
Fourteen days of expedition for the ascent and descent. Days of walking for 8 to 10 hours. Oxygen becoming scarce. Sleeping in unheated lodges. All members of the group, young and old, stepped out of their comfort zone.

«There were difficulties, that's for sure. It wasn't easy with the lack of oxygen and the steep slopes. But I found it so beautiful that my brain was more focused on that than anything else. It wasn't even a question of whether or not to continue. I was experiencing such great happiness that I wanted to stay in the moment,» says Jocelyne Gatien, one of the participants.

There was no shortage of daily challenges. Fatigue built up a little more each day and health problems began to arise. «There was gastroenteritis, bronchitis, irritation, and Khumbu cough... everyone was affected by something,» explained professor Riesco. The team's doctors were there to take care of those with health problems and ensure everyone's safety.

## Resilient older adults

This was the initial hypothesis, and the project's initiator does not believe she was wrong. «Older participants fared better psychologically than the research group,» says researcher Eléonor Riesco without hesitation.



## A bright return and further research

On November 24, 2024, the four participants returned home with smiles on their faces and eyes shining, proud of their extraordinary achievement. They will cherish unforgettable memories of the experience. And through their resilience, they have shown that old age is not an insurmountable obstacle! «It was the expedition of my life. I've been on a few, but this one was memorable because of its complexity. For me, it was a great challenge,» says Réjeanne, who celebrated her 75th birthday during the expedition.

Researchers have begun compiling and analyzing the measurements collected before, during, and after the expedition. The results are expected to be released in the fall of 2025. A project to follow...



## TESTIMONY OF JOCELYNE GATIEN — RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Excerpts from a participant's logbook and reflections on how the research has impacted her life

By **Jocelyne Gatien**, participant in the project High-altitude expedition: *when aging means pushing yourself beyond your limits*

### Wednesday, November 13, 2024 — Return from Everest base camp

It's done. I walk on and on, one step at a time, on the way back. I'm returning from base camp, from that desert of rocks and mountains, hidden above the clouds. Where there are no landmarks, and where the notions of space and time merge. In my bag, I carry a few rocks, and in my head, a whirlwind of thoughts. This project has transformed me. Climbing this mountain with great respect is like growing older in search of spirituality.

We think we know our own limits until we discover greater strengths and unsuspected resources within ourselves. During the expedition, I learned that my mental strength was much greater than I thought. It was this strength that enabled me to make it to base camp, despite the challenge it represented for me. Without it, I would probably have given up.

I look up at the majestic mountains and want to allow myself to look to the future with boldness and a little recklessness. After all, I'm only 70. And they say that the best way to predict the future is to create it. So why not continue to be the architect of the projects we are passionate about, to dream and to challenge ourselves? I also realized that, when faced with the beauty and immensity of the mountains, wonder makes fear and anxiety disappear. Perhaps that is what aging is all about: taking the time to admire, to recognize the beauty around you, and to savor every moment.

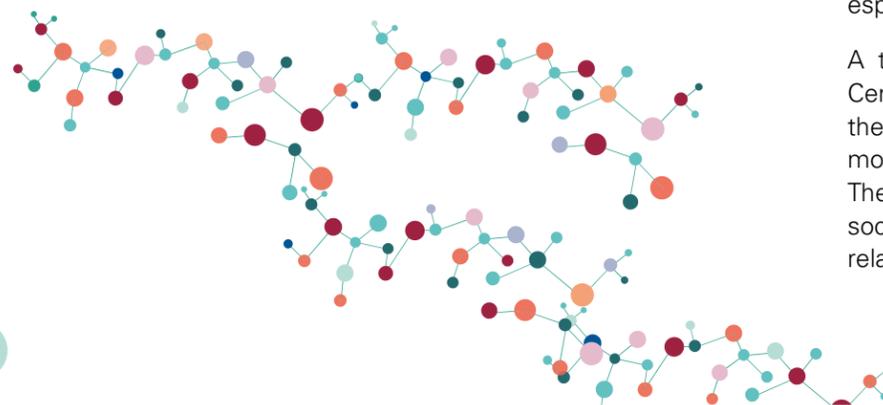
Growing older also means learning to adapt and draw on your inner resources. As in the mountains, you have to keep going despite the obstacles, slow down when necessary, but never stop moving forward. I return home with a sense of satisfaction, because this unique experience has allowed me to realize that I can trust myself.

Thanks to the research project, I discovered great determination and resilience within myself. For me, resilience finally makes sense: it is my ability to overcome obstacles while thriving. And determination then becomes a powerful source of motivation to keep moving forward. It is my determination that gives me the resilience I need to turn challenges into opportunities and dreams into reality.

As Dr. Boris Cyrulnik so aptly wrote: «Resilience is not a recipe for happiness. It is simply a strategy for fighting misfortune in order to maintain a zest for life, despite the whispers of ghosts in the depths of one's memory.»



Jocelyne Gatien on her way to base camp



## FROM INTENTION TO ACTION TO GET MORE ACTIVE: HOW ABOUT WE TAKE INSPIRATION FROM YOUR BEST TOFU RECIPE TO ACHIEVE THIS?

By **Caroline Guay**, master's student, and **Guillaume Léonard**, researcher

Do you like tofu? For many, let's agree that it's not very appealing unless it's prepared with a marinade that transforms its taste, or hidden in a tasty spaghetti sauce! Exercising when you live with chronic pain is a bit like that: getting back into physical activity can seem daunting, even though we know that exercise is good for our health. The transition from intention to action becomes a real challenge.



The research team preparing for the physical challenge

Do you think you are the cause of this lack of motivation? Be aware that your genes also play a role in this. Although humans are naturally programmed to be physically active, they are also programmed to avoid unnecessary effort. This duality is a challenge for everyone. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than one in three adults fail to meet the recommended levels of physical activity. Yet the benefits of exercise are widely recognized. How can we overcome this natural tendency toward inactivity, especially when we are in constant pain?

A team from the Chronic Pain Management Expertise Centre at the CIUSSS de l'Estrie — CHUS is investigating the effects of a strategy aimed at transforming the motivation to exercise in people living with chronic pain. The key to countering low interest in physical activity is social connection, a fundamental human need to maintain relationships with others.

As part of this research project, twelve participants took on a collective challenge: to engage in physical activity for six months while collectively accumulating 7,000 kilometers, corresponding to the cross-Canada journey undertaken in parallel by real adventurers from the AKOR 2024 Expedition, with whom the participants were put in contact. The result: they managed to accumulate 7,000 kilometers! The next step will be to study the extent to which they have maintained an active lifestyle six months after the experiment.

Preliminary results gathered during group meetings and individual interviews point us toward interesting ways to enjoy physical activity and thus move from intention to action:

- **Share the activity with someone else:** Knowing that you are socially connected to someone, whether remotely or in person, promotes regularity, reduces dropouts, and makes it easier to get back into it after a break.
- **Combine the activity with a passion:** Walking to take photos, for example, combines physical well-being with personal enjoyment, providing an immediate sense of accomplishment.
- **Enjoy nature:** Exercising outdoors in a peaceful setting increases the psychological benefits of physical activity, similar to the effects of social connection.
- **Finish gently:** Ending an activity at a lower intensity helps to preserve a pleasant memory of the effort, making you more likely to want to do it again.

These ingredients help to associate positive emotions with physical activity, such as pleasure and joy. The health benefits, although slower to materialize, will be felt naturally and sustainably.

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## RESEARCH ON AGING IS AGELESS

Did you know that participating in a research project can play a key role in advancing knowledge about aging? By contributing to our research projects, you are helping to improve our understanding of aging and enhance the care, policies, and quality of life of older adults and their loved ones.

All of our research projects are governed by strict ethical protocols that guarantee informed consent and the safety of participants. Men and women of all ages can contribute to research on aging.

### Participate in a research project!

- **Get involved with a research team** at the Laboratoire par et pour les aînés. Visit [cdrv.ca/en/mieux-veillir/lippa](http://cdrv.ca/en/mieux-veillir/lippa).
- **By registering with the CdRV Participant Recruitment Center** at [cdrv.ca/participe-recherche](http://cdrv.ca/participe-recherche) or by calling 819-780-1832.

### Take part in our activities!

We regularly organize activities that allow you to exchange ideas, reflect, and sometimes even co-create with our research teams. These events are designed by and for older adults, and they are open to everyone, regardless of age!

By taking part in our activities, you contribute to a better understanding of the realities of aging and help generate ideas and solutions that truly meet the needs of older adults and their loved ones.

Check out our activity schedule: [cdrv.ca/evenements](http://cdrv.ca/evenements)

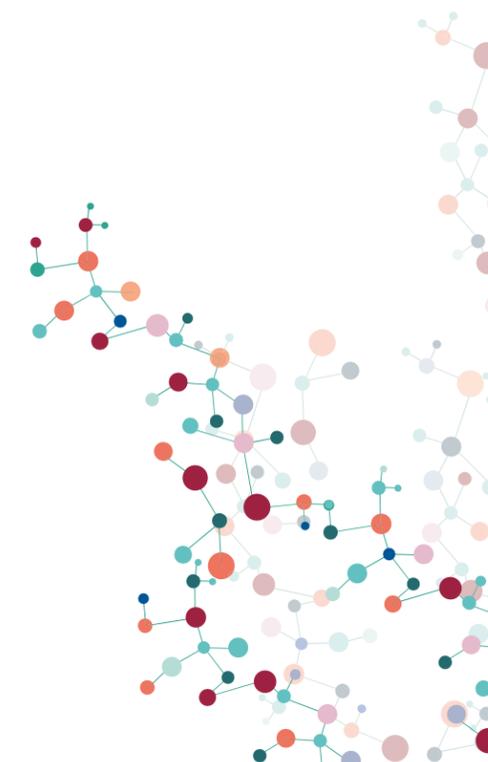


### Stay tuned!

Send us your email address at [Info-cdrv@USherbrooke.ca](mailto:Info-cdrv@USherbrooke.ca) or visit our website: [cdrv.ca/mieux-veillir/journal-encrage](http://cdrv.ca/mieux-veillir/journal-encrage)

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