Objectives
To bring together a diverse, interdisciplinary group of interested individuals to develop a comprehensive, multi-faceted, national, long-term research program on issues related to aging and critical care. To foster opportunities for knowledge exchange and research collaborations and to promote awareness and understanding of the issues related to aging and critical care.

Background
As the population ages, the proportion of patients who have advanced medical diseases and multiple co-morbidities will increase. Accordingly, our healthcare system will need to adapt to the growing need for ICU and other hospital services. Discussions will be needed at many levels on the appropriate use of life-extending technology at the end of life. Currently, our understanding of patient and family preferences towards life sustaining treatments at the end of life is imperfect and a description of the potential clinical outcomes necessary to make informed choices is poorly described. The impact of the aging population on the most expensive sector of acute care medicine has not been adequately investigated. We urgently require research to better meet the needs of this special population and their families as well as of society at large.

Planning a Research Agenda
For this conference funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and supported by Queen’s University/ Kingston General Hospital, we are bringing together critical care clinician researchers from across the country along with researchers with expertise in communication and end-of-life decision making, qualitative research, and outcomes methodology in the fields of geriatrics, gerontology, nursing, health economics, palliative medicine, and social work for a day-long symposium to explore and prioritize future research directions in aging and critical care in Canada.

For more information about the Conference, the CARENET, or the REALISTIC 80 study, please contact:

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Our research team, headed by Dr Daren Heyland (KGH/ Queen's University) was recently awarded a CIHR operating grant to conduct a multi-centre project exploring the Realities, Expectations and Attitudes to Life Support Technologies in Intensive Care for Octogenarians.

The REALISTIC 80 study will be conducted under the auspices of the Canadian Critical Care Trials Group (CCCTG) and in association with the Canadian Researchers at the End of Life Network (CARENET), a CIHR-sponsored New Emerging Team. Twenty intensive care units across Canada will be participating.