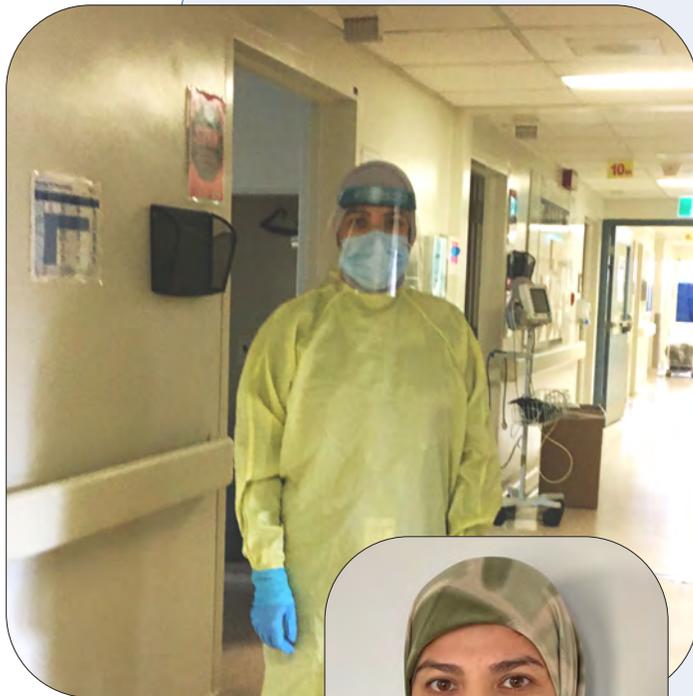


# GPA Stories from the Point of Care



GPA Certified Coach (CC)  
Mariam Mokhtarzada-Salim



For the 2021 | 2022 AGE Recognition Awards, we asked GPA Certified Coaches to send us GPA stories from the point of care during the pandemic. Your responses speak beautifully to resilience. We don't pretend to understand what you've been through, what you've seen, or what's been asked or expected of you during this time. Some of you were redeployed to long-term care. Many of you are probably still exhausted. All of you are part of the GPA family, so celebrating your stories is a tribute to the wonderful work you do.

Despite extraordinary circumstances, you made time for GPA huddles, informal coaching, mentoring and modelling. Many of you trialed new ways to safely facilitate GPA, because you felt the education was too important to forgo. You shared what you learned. Some of you worked with AGE to develop a virtual workshop format so GPA Certified Coach training could continue while meeting pandemic protocols. And you did it all during a devastating global health crisis.

Perhaps what touched us most is how you treated those in your care as family and did what family must always do in a crisis — protect its most vulnerable while supporting each other. We are in awe of your resilience.

## Mariam's Story



The tools learned in GPA are used daily in our practice in the Hospital Elder Life Program (HELP). They help us recognize Behavioural and Psychological Symptoms of Dementia (BPSD). GPA also helps us communicate more effectively with each other when discussing how to help patients with protective behaviours. GPA reminds us not to label patients or behaviours. We're able to see each patient as an individual. Having taken GPA Basics, I feel more confident in care and it empowers me. I feel in control when faced with protective behaviours. As a team trained in GPA, we are less frustrated and more effective knowing that all behaviour has meaning.”

Mariam Mokhtarzada-Salim, GPA Certified Coach



Physiotherapist Mariam Mokhtarzada-Salim is an Elder Life Specialist at Trillium Health Partners' (THP) Mississauga Hospital in Ontario. She saw first-hand how hospitalized older adults were impacted by the pandemic, especially in the first wave. Thank you Mariam for sharing your GPA story.

Up to 45% of all older adults living with dementia admitted to hospital exhibit responsive behaviours<sup>1</sup>, risking injury to patients and caregivers. Staff struggle to respond to behaviours without specific education. Fortunately, Mariam and her colleagues have all participated in Gentle Persuasive Approaches (GPA) in Dementia Care education (*continued over*).

Helping patients remain mentally alert is a key aspect of Mariam’s role. Many of her patients are living with dementia and many are at risk of developing delirium and/or exhibiting responsive behaviours.

A few years ago, Mariam was searching for ways to help patients. One of her managers, an advocate for senior friendly initiatives, suggested the GPA program to Mariam. Ever since, Mariam has been a vocal advocate for GPA. “I love GPA! GPA is appropriate to help older adults in every area of care. It’s a great program. Everyone who works with older adults should have GPA education.” Leadership at Trillium Health Partners obviously agree. The GPA curriculum is embedded into staff education across its sites — Mississauga Hospital, Credit Valley Hospital, the Queensway Hospital and its new Reactivation Care Centres. Sarah Telfer (*Photo below, centre*), a Clinical Educator and a GPA Certified Coach since 2019, is responsible for organizing GPA education for staff at THP. Between Jan. 1st and Mar. 31st, 2022, 1,146 staff have participated in GPA across Trillium Health Partners’ sites.



(From left) GPA CCs Daniel Fabella, Sarah Telfer and Kathleen Dykstra from Mississauga Hospital.

We asked Mariam how helpful GPA has been to her during the pandemic. She paused before answering, “I never really thought about it like that,” she replied. “Using GPA is second nature to me. We use GPA every day.” Are there GPA approaches the team favours, we asked? “All GPA teaching is useful,” she says sincerely. “It reminds us to avoid labelling people and their behaviours. We are taught that all behaviour has meaning and it is up to us as care providers to learn more about our patients in order to uncover that meaning. If I had to pick one GPA approach I use regularly, it would be the *Stop and Go* approach,” Mariam says.



**STOP:** Whatever you are doing can wait.  
**THINK:** Give the person your full attention.  
**OBSERVE:** Recognize behavioural cues and acknowledge the emotional message.  
**PLAN:** Consider when to resume care and how to modify your approach.

Mariam shared the story of Adrian (*name changed*) who arrived in acute care early in the pandemic. Just being in hospital was causing Adrian great stress. Pandemic

protocols — the charged atmosphere and masked and gowned staff coming into his personal space — were adding to his stress. He was also living with dementia. He asked for his family constantly and could not understand where they were. When Mariam met Adrian, he was regularly expressing behaviours. These had been recorded on his hospital chart which meant the team had difficulty getting him approved for a place in long-term care at that point. Mariam felt GPA could help.

The team started working with Adrian. “We learned more about him, assessed his abilities, made note of his likes and dislikes, including the best ways and times to approach him in his personal space,” Mariam told us. Slowly, Adrian’s behaviours happened less frequently. Mariam mentioned proudly that the team had helped him without using medication. Eventually, Adrian did move to a place in long-term care and Mariam credits this success to the team’s use of GPA.

“As clinicians, our training instills in us that in every situation we must do *something*, we need a plan. GPA teaches us that when a person’s behaviour escalates, sometimes doing nothing *is having a plan*. Standing by and listening to the person from a safe distance is doing something. We are offering reassurance to the person, which can give them the support they need in the moment to stay calm.”

Thank you Trillium Health Partners for your continuing commitment to GPA dementia education for staff.

### GPA Certified Coaches across Trillium Health Partners

(In addition to Coaches mentioned in the story)

Thank you Coaches, for all you do!

- Mary Ackie
  - Hayley Altenburg
  - Reenu Arora
  - Christine Dias
  - Heather Ead
  - Kathie Harcourt
  - Sara Hoondert
  - Roscelle Kumarakulasingam
  - Danielle Lewis
  - Brian Lalisan
  - Jackie Marquez
  - Matthieu Payette
  - Zainab Rizvi
  - Kathleen Schindell
  - Iryna Sevryukova
  - Cheryl Simpson
  - Jodie Sutcliffe
  - Jennifer Tandoc
  - Milena Wisniowska
- From Alzheimer Society of Peel:  
Danielle Farrell

<sup>1</sup>Dewing & Dijk, 2016; Keenan et al., 2011; Nayton et al., 2014.

Read our evaluations of GPA in acute care settings