Thinking 'upstream' about the health of family/friend carers

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Overview of presentation

1) Caregiving context in Canada

2) Research on health of family/friend carers

3) Thinking 'upstream' about carers' health

4) Promising directions

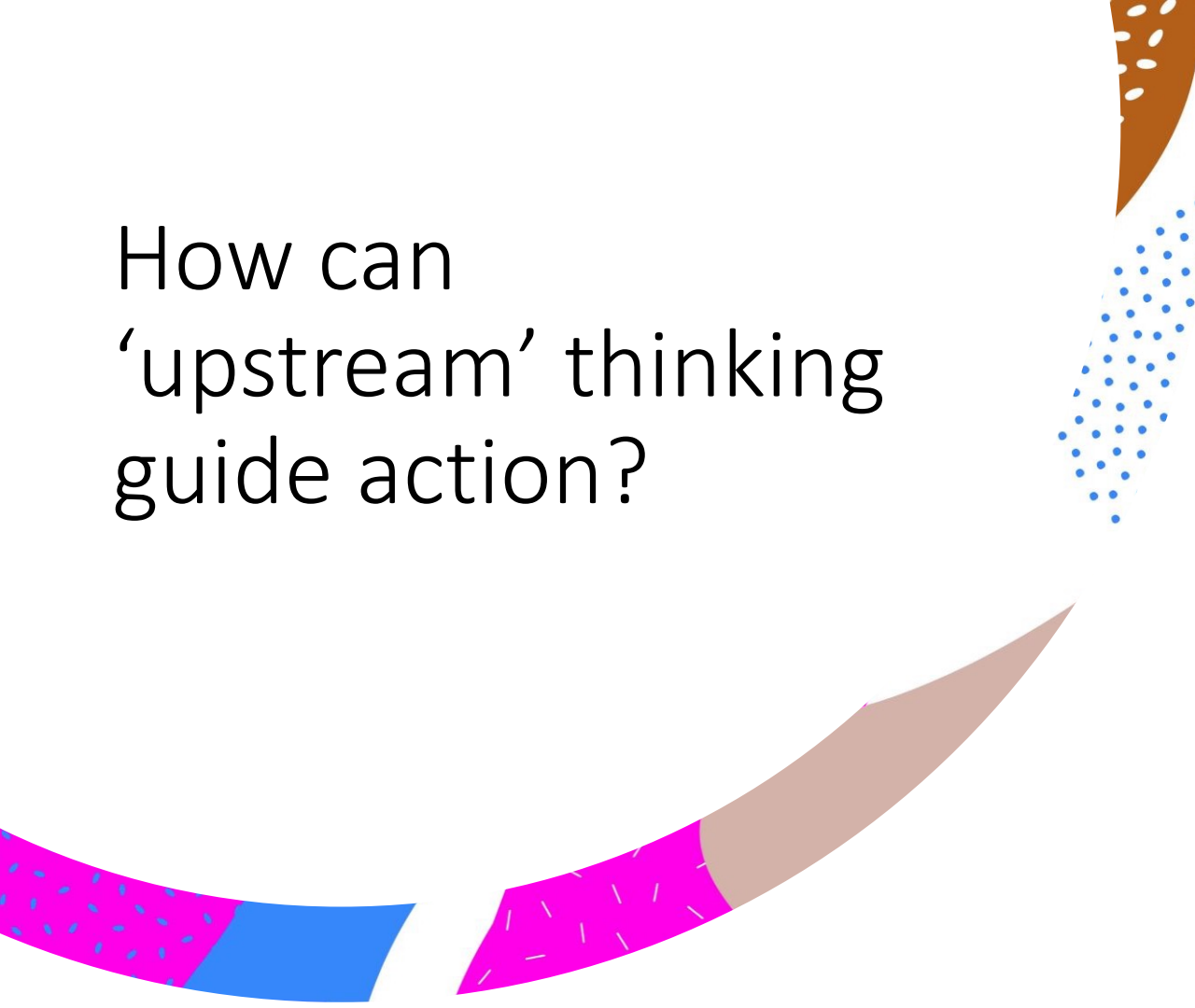# Research on health and family/friend care

- Methodological, definitional challenges
  - Broad definitions of carers
  - Self-identification and representation
- Providing care under certain conditions can generate chronic stress and ill-health
- More research, attention needed to inequities, macro-level contexts

Thinking "upstream" about carers' health

- Contextual forces shape circumstances of unpaid caring over peoples' lives as well as carers' capacities, experiences, health

- Beyond individualized, clinical and short-term solutions

- Rights-based approach: beyond approaches that orient to people solely in their role as carers/to sustaining the role

- Consider health impacts of a) being unable to help AND b) being unable to set limits (Covid-19 example)

Contexts shaping health of unpaid carers

- Dominant expectations and assumptions about care and aging – gendered, moralized, embedded in practice/policy

- Availability, affordability of options for carers and older adults – alternatives and supports (formal care, caring communities). Globalization (Chappell & Penning, 2005)

- Design, policies shaping structure of our daily lives: policies related to workplaces, housing, cities, bureaucracies, formal health and social care systems (make providing care, OR setting limits, easier)

How can 'upstream' thinking guide action?

- From caregiver assessments... to policy assessments (CGPL)

- From financial tax credits/allowances... to carer leave legislation (e.g., CCB)... to UBI

- From system navigation... to integrated care

- From patchwork supports for a few caregivers... to strong publicly funded services for care recipients (CCCE)

- From 'activating' families ... to supporting choice and independence through services

- From carers' health... to social citizenship: politicizing and mobilizing around care as public, social justice issue

Further reading/references

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