



COMPETENCE NETWORK  
HEALTH WORKFORCE  
SWITZERLAND

# Development and feasibility study of a service learning program involving students to support caregivers in Switzerland (PAuSES) *Proches-Aidant-e-s : un Service des Étudiant-e-s en Santé*

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This project is part of a cooperation between the Swiss Universities in Health to establish a competence centre for workforce shortage among health professionals. Different sub-projects will develop basic knowledge and measures.

With the ongoing demographical changes and a persistent shortage of healthcare professionals, informal caregivers of people with chronic health conditions or special needs will face increasing demands for their involvement. Putting up support services for informal care-givers could help prevent burnouts and secondary health problems. To this end, an innovative program involving healthcare students, *Proches-Aidant-e-s : un Service des Étudiant-e-s en Santé (PAuSES)* (A Healthcare Students' Service for Caregivers) will be developed, tested by the University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland. With this program, students will deliver services to informal caregivers, on a voluntary base, as part of their training. The project will be carried out in three steps: (1) identification of program components with partners; (2) program development and; (3) feasibility study. At the end of the project, PAuSES will allow future professionals to be more efficient and to have a better understanding of informal caregivers 'situation. Informal caregivers should benefit from a better occupational balance.

## INTRODUCTION

As in many other countries, Switzerland faces huge challenges related to epidemiological and demographic changes, parallel to a significant shortage of healthcare workforce. The Federal Council has taken several actions to tackle this situation, including measures to support informal caregivers, which is also an indirect way to respond to a shortage of trained professionals (Conseil Fédéral, 2015).

The implications of close relatives in the support of persons with chronic health conditions or special needs is a current topical issue (Conseil Fédéral, 2014; 2015). Relatives and other informal caregivers are essential components of the present homecare policies put up by municipalities and cantons.

Informal caregivers' personal experiences are very diverse: positive, such as being engaged in very significant occupations but also negative, such as occupational disruption, occupational imbalance, physical, emotional, and financial strain, even in the Swiss context (Perrig-Chiello, Höpflinger et Schnegg, 2010; Perrig-Chiello, Höpflinger, et Hutchinson, 2011; Pin et al., 2015). Several actions have been undertaken throughout Switzerland, but do not yet meet the increasing needs.

With their specific interpersonal and technical skills, healthcare students could give a valuable support to informal caregivers, complementary to existing professional and voluntary programs.

## METHODS

Acknowledging the complexity of caregivers' needs and determinants of professionals shortage, a multiphase mixed methods design will be used.

Three sequential steps will be implemented. 1) Data gathering and identification of the main components of the program, 2) Program development and; 3) Feasibility study

Based on 20 interviews with key informants and a scoping review, the program will be developed in close relation with professionals and caregivers. A feasibility study will be conducted with 20 caregivers in two cantons. Data will be collected through pre/post interviews, fieldnotes and structured observations.

Analysis will rely on different approaches as described by Miles and Huberman (2003).

## PLANNING

Identification of program's components (2017-2018), Program development (2018), Feasibility study (2018-2019), Final report 2020)

## IN BRIEF

PAuSES is an innovative program which will provide new forms of support to informal care-givers, customised to their actual and evolving needs. It will provide students with solid professional and interprofessional skills, rooted in their personal experience, to support efficient and effective collaboration with informal caregivers. At the end of the feasibility study, PAuSES should be integrated in the ordinary curriculum of the Faculty of Health at University of Applied Sciences Western Switzerland, which provide education and research for seven health professions (Midwifery, Osteopathy, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Nutrition and Dietetics, Radiologic Medical Imaging Technology and Occupational Therapy).

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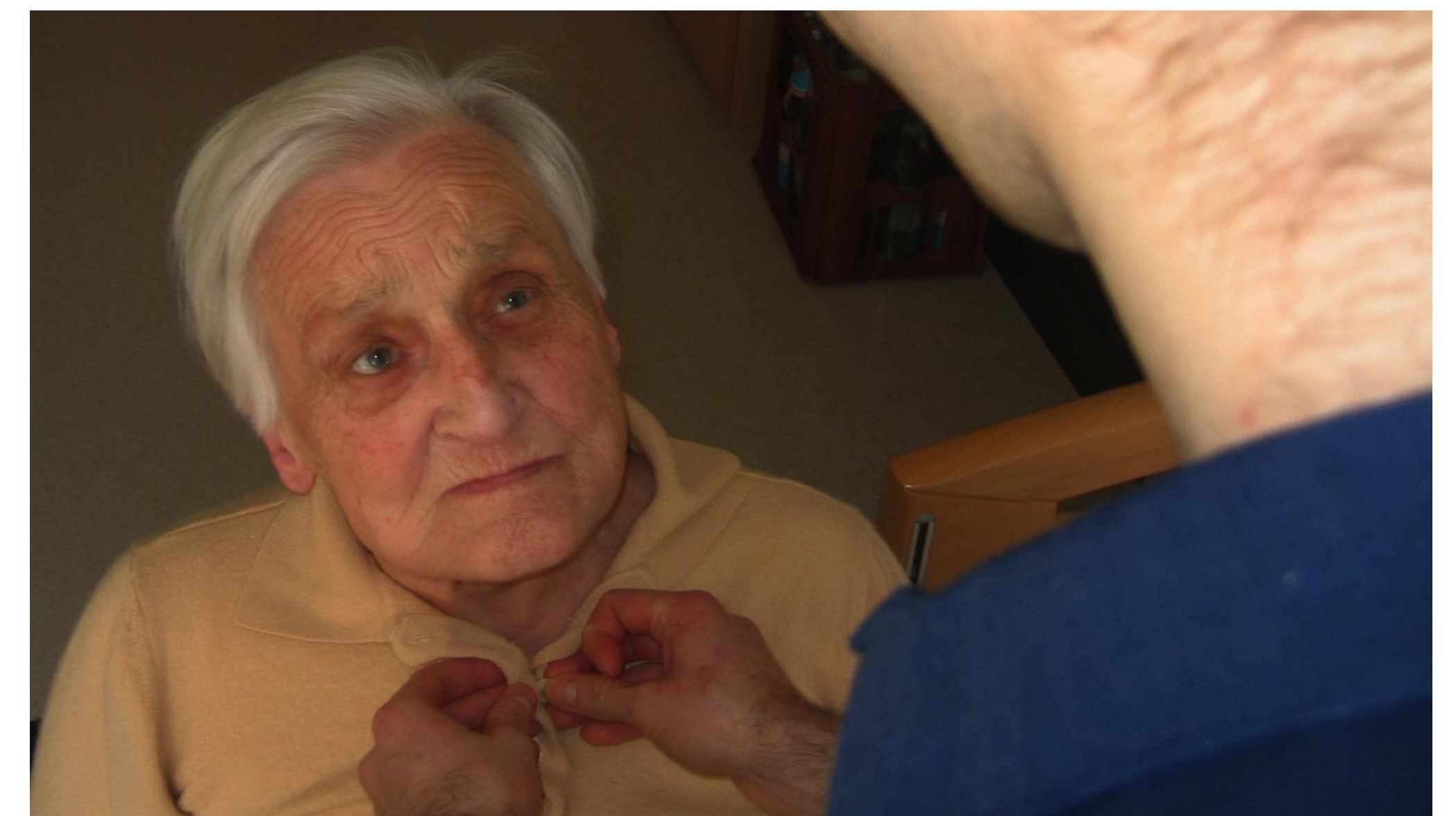


Figure 1. An old man is receiving help to dress up

## AIMS

By the mean of a service learning program :

- 1) To improve informal caregivers' quality of life, especially their occupational balance
- 2) To improve future professionals' efficiency in collaborating with informal caregivers

Type of services	n
Shared social and leisure activities	219
Assistance in personal care and activities of daily living	179
Presence at home for a short period of time	169
Surveillance and supervision	166
Outside home services	155
Information seeking	145
Other	9

Table 1. Services that would be chosen by students. Online study conducted in 2016 with 250 students from the HES-SO

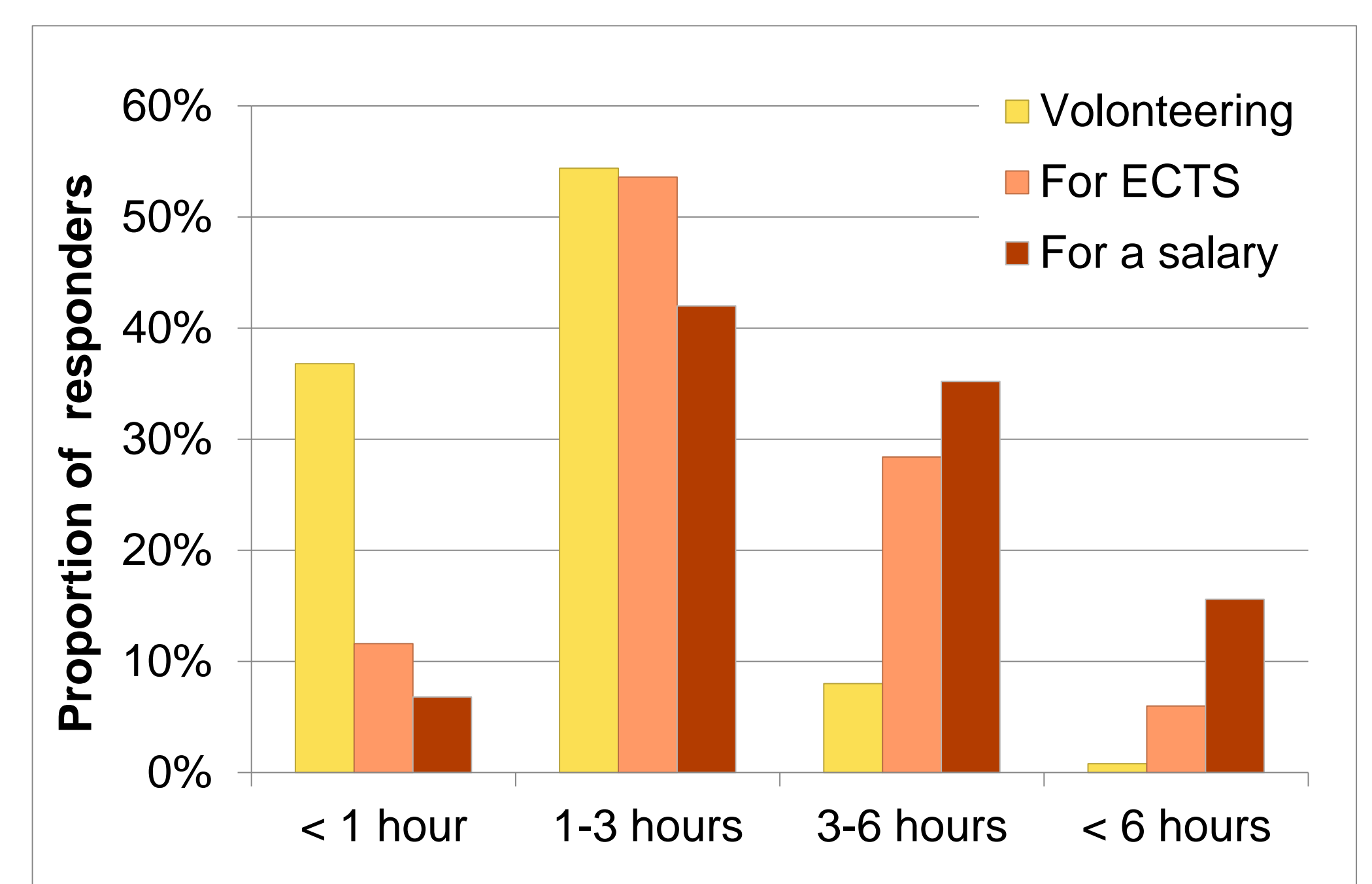


Chart 1. Availability of students by weeks, according to reward Online study conducted in 2016 with 250 students from the HES-SO

Shortage of healthcare professionals and family caregivers (PePA)



Hes·so

University of Applied Sciences and Arts  
Western Switzerland