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**A Feminist Study of Older Women's
Health
and Health Promotion**

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for the degree of Master of Arts in Nursing**

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ABSTRACT

Older women experience changes in their health as they age but continue to experience health and wellness, and to promote their health. In this feminist study, nine women who are chronologically aged over 70 years have described their understandings of their own health and health promotion. The participants live in their own homes and manage their lives. They also purchase meals on wheels, and may have other people do household and personal cares which they used to do themselves.

This thesis outlines discourses which are currently representative of understandings of older women's health and which provide the context in which older women experience health. This context is dominated by health professionals, especially in medicine, who represent older women's health in terms of decline and deterioration. This conflicts with the representations by these older women.

Nursing is located in the range of discourses, but is found to be most aligned with medicine and therefore replicates knowledge of older women's health in terms of decline and loss. Nursing has also failed to generate knowledge of positive aspects of older women's health. In order for nursing to provide health care which is appropriate for older women, an emphasis on health and wellness from the perspective of older women needs to be further developed. Nursing has a strong invitation to work with elders in a different way to all other health professionals.

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