



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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What does a face of dementia look like to you?

Society is challenging stereotypes on World Alzheimer's Day

Vancouver, BC – This World Alzheimer's Day, Sept. 21, the public is being asked to challenge their stereotypes about people with Alzheimer's disease. The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is doing this by launching a social media campaign, announcing funding support for 11 B.C. researchers and featuring profiles of local people impacted by the disease at www.facesofdementia.ca.

The aim is to help the public understand that the disease impacts everyone and that it will take working together to turn the rising tide of dementia.

"The faces of dementia campaign is meant to help the public relate to an illness that is not only heartbreaking for families and friends on the dementia journey but also threatens to cripple our healthcare system," explained Jean Blake, CEO, Alzheimer Society of B.C.

"The faces of dementia are individuals who are living with the disease, they are the families and friends caring for a loved one on the journey, they are advocates who want to see improved dementia care in our province, they are researchers who are working hard to find a cure, and they are donors, leaders, and volunteers supporting a vision of a world one day without dementia."

The recent World Alzheimer Report 2011 indicates there is a treatment gap, that early interventions are beneficial but that very few people are getting an early diagnosis. Without formal diagnosis, persons with dementia and their families cannot access treatments and support that they need. This means they are on the dementia journey alone.

"We can't let that happen," said Blake. "We know that the prevalence of dementia is increasing due to an aging population. Research brings us better treatments and closer to finding a cure. Education programs and support services provide help for today. We hope greater awareness about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias will also encourage better brain health and early diagnosis."

Currently in six communities across B.C., the Ministry of Health and regional health authorities have partnered with the Society to reach out to doctors and other health professionals to increase opportunities for early diagnosis and early interventions.

The Society is also announcing today that 11 B.C. researchers are receiving funding support through the Alzheimer Society Research Program. Among the grant recipients, Michael Hayden and his team will examine whether the ABCA1 gene can influence the development of Alzheimer's disease by regulating brain cholesterol metabolism and inflammation. Pradeep Kuman Ramana is hoping to find a way to detect Alzheimer's disease earlier by using MRI

scans. Colette Smart hopes to improve early detection of those at risk for Alzheimer's disease and determine whether attention training would be an effective intervention by studying "cognitive complainers". The 11 B.C. recipients of the ASRP grants and awards this year are:

Biomedical Research Grants and Awards

- Shernaz Bamji (UBC)
- Douglas Allan (UBC)
- Cheryl Wellington (UBC)
- Pradeep Kumar Ramana (SFU)
- Michael Hayden (UBC)
- Mirza Faisal Beg (SFU)
- Zhe Wang (UBC)

Quality of Life Research Grants and Awards

- Andre Smith (UVic)
- Heather Cooke (UVic)
- Colette Smart (UVic)
- Alexander Jouk (UVic)

Currently, 1 in 2 Canadians know someone with dementia. One in four Canadians has someone in their family with dementia.

Today, someone in Canada develops dementia every five minutes. In 30 years, if nothing is done, there will be one new case every two minutes.

At www.facesofdementia.ca, visitors can:

- Participate in a social media campaign to help promote awareness
- Find out about current dementia research in B.C.
- Read articles from British Columbians currently on the dementia journey
- Link to information and resources about early warning signs and local education programs and support services
- Find out how to be a part of the wave of change to turn the rising tide of dementia

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About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. provides a provincial network of support and education for families impacted by dementia and people concerned about memory loss. Communities across the province count on the Society for support services, for information and education programs, for advocacy to improve dementia care in B.C. and to fund research to find the causes and cures. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading health authority on the disease in Canada.

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