

## Put your mind to it Make change happen for those living with Alzheimer's

New data from the Alzheimer Society in Canada shows Alzheimer's disease isn't just about our parents' generation – it's about ours. This information comes from preliminary results of the national study *Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia on Canadian Society*, released today to mark the beginning of Alzheimer Awareness Month.

An estimated 500,000 Canadians have Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia, according to *Rising Tide* – an increase over previous figures that reflects the growing prevalence of a disorder that has become the second most feared disease for Canadians as they age.

The new data also confirms what experts have long suspected: that people develop the disease at a younger age.

"We now know that here in B.C., more than 70,000 people are living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia," says Rosemary Rawnsley, Executive Director of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. "The public tends to view Alzheimer's as something that impacts older people: our parents, our grandparents. This new data confirms that nearly 10,000 British Columbians *under the age of 65* are currently living with this disease – people still in the work force, still vibrant and active in our communities as leaders and mentors, dreaming of a retirement they've spent years working towards."

Jim Mann knows too well this changing face of Alzheimer's disease. Diagnosed with Early Onset Dementia nearly two years ago at the age of 58, he's determined to speak out and show others that dementia is not always what they expect.

"I think we all have a reason to care, and that's why I've become an advocate for myself and others with the disease," Mann explains. "We need to put our minds to funding research, and supporting the many families impacted by this disease to help end isolation and eliminate stigma. If we don't act now – if I don't speak up – who will?"

Rawnsley adds that it's important for people to learn the warning signs, and also to be aware of steps they can take to help reduce their risk. "Pursuing healthy lifestyle habits can not only help manage the disease after diagnosis, it can help reduce the risk of developing the disease. Challenging our brains by learning new things, staying physically and socially active, and eating well are all easy actions we can take to help maintain the health of our brains."

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## Put Your Mind To It



Other highlights from the initial findings of *Rising Tide* include:

- 1 in 11 Canadians over the age of 65 has Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.
- Of the 500,000 Canadians affected by dementia, more than 71,000 of them are *under* the age of 65, and approximately 50,000 of them are *under* the age of 60.
- In just five years, as many as 50% more Canadians and their families could be facing Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia.
- As it stands today, the number of Canadians living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia will more than double within a generation (25 years).
- Further results of *Rising Tide*, evaluating the social and economic impact of dementia on Canadian society, will be released later in 2009.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases that destroy vital brain cells. They are not a normal part of aging. Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, accounts for approximately 64 per cent of all dementias in Canada.

While each of the related diseases has unique aspects, symptoms include a gradual and continuing decline of memory, changes in judgment or reasoning, mood and behaviour, and an inability to perform familiar tasks. These symptoms rob a person of the ability to live independently, and increase their dependence on others for everyday living.

The Alzheimer Society, a federation of 10 provincially-focused organizations, is the leading nationwide health organization for people affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in Canada.

The Society is a principal funder of Alzheimer research and training, provides enhanced care and support to people with the disease, their families and their caregivers, and is a prominent voice within all levels of government. It is also a key player in Alzheimer's Disease International, an organization at the forefront of worldwide efforts to fight dementia.

The 2009 Alzheimer Awareness Campaign was made possible in part through the generosity of the following sponsors: Pfizer Canada Inc., CN, Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy, Janssen-Ortho Inc., and Genworth Financial Canada.

For more information on *Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia on Canadian Society*, please see the attached fact sheet. For more information on the Alzheimer Society, Alzheimer's disease or related dementias, or to learn what you can do to reduce your risk, please visit [www.alzheimerbc.org](http://www.alzheimerbc.org).

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**For more information, please contact:**

Michele McCable, Communications Coordinator  
Alzheimer Society of B.C.  
Phone: 604-742-4906  
Email: [mmccabe@alzheimerbc.org](mailto:mmccabe@alzheimerbc.org)