



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Up to 50 per cent of Canadians with dementia wait too long for diagnosis**

### **Early diagnosis keeps lives from unravelling says Alzheimer Society during Alzheimer Awareness Month**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – As many as 50 per cent of Canadians with dementia are not diagnosed early enough,\* losing precious time when care and support can make a tremendous difference in their quality of life and avert unnecessary crises for their families. That's why during Alzheimer Awareness Month, the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is launching a new campaign, ***Early diagnosis keeps your life from unravelling***, to promote the benefits of early diagnosis.

More than 70,000 British Columbians are living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia. This number is set to double within the next 25 years. Fear and stigma continue to be huge barriers to seeking help. In a recent Nanos survey, 60 per cent of Canadians polled said it would be harder to disclose if they, or someone close to them, had Alzheimer's disease compared to other diseases because of the social stigma associated with mental health issues.

Earlier diagnosis opens the door to important information, resources and support through the Society, which helps people with dementia focus on their abilities to remain independent in their homes and communities longer. With early diagnosis, people can access medications that, although not effective for everyone, have the greatest impact when taken early. On a practical level, an early diagnosis gives someone the chance to explain the changes happening in their life to family and friends and allows families to plan ahead.

"Seventy-four per cent of Canadians know someone with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. We want to equip British Columbians with the support, resources and education they need," says Maria Howard, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. "Early diagnosis can bring a measure of relief to people with dementia and their families and help them take control of their lives and plan ahead. It opens the door to care and treatment that helps people with dementia remain active and independent longer and improve their quality of life."

Throughout January, Canadians are encouraged to visit the campaign website, **[earlydiagnosis.ca/diagnosticprecoce.ca](http://earlydiagnosis.ca/diagnosticprecoce.ca)**, to learn how to spot the signs of dementia,

understand the benefits of a diagnosis and prepare for a doctor's visit. This year's awareness campaign is proudly supported by the KPMG Foundation.

*\*Bradford, A. (2009). Missed and delayed diagnosis of dementia in primary care: Prevalence and contributing factors. Alzheimer Disease and Associated Disorders. Retrieved from [www.alzheimerjournal.com](http://www.alzheimerjournal.com), October-December 2009.*

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### **About dementia**

Dementia is a term that describes a general group of brain disorders. Symptoms include the loss of memory, impaired judgment, and changes in behaviour and personality. Dementia is progressive, degenerative and eventually terminal. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia accounting for almost two-thirds of dementias in Canada today.

### **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, information and education programs, 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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