

Connections

Linking a community of dementia support



Now more than ever, let's unite and make memories matter

Everyone at the Alzheimer Society of B.C was looking forward to having you join us at one of our 22 *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's* events upcoming in early May. As you're aware, COVID-19 has changed our communities, and we are no longer able to meet in person, on the day we'd planned.

We know connection is so important – particularly at a time when people feel so isolated. This is why on a new date – Sunday, May 31 – all Alzheimer Societies across Canada will unite to bring you a special event: the 2020 *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's* – online. Broadcast live from 9 a.m. PDT, the online

event can be accessed from anywhere that has an internet connection.

By participating, you will honour the people in your life who have been affected by dementia and help ensure others on the dementia journey know that they are not alone. We hope you will join us to show that no matter what the world looks like, we are still united to support people affected by dementia.

You can register today to represent your local community or learn more about the walk online by visiting walkforalzheimers.ca. Together, as Canadians, we make memories matter.

Read and learn more

To learn more about how to support people affected by dementia in your community through the online *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, visit walkforalzheimers.ca.

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Staying together while we're apart

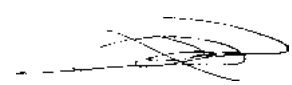
So much has changed in our lives since our last newsletter. The COVID-19 outbreak has brought a unique set of challenges to people living with dementia and caregivers, including disruption to routines, isolation and in some cases, a need for increased supports.

While in-person activities such as Minds in Motion®, support groups and education sessions have been suspended until further notice, we are focusing on the ways we can continue to provide support and education through webinars, increased outreach via our First Link® support calls and the First Link® Dementia Helpline. Effective immediately and permanently, the Helpline will stay open to calls in English until 8 p.m., Monday to Friday. Support in Mandarin, Cantonese and Punjabi is available from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

It is our mission to ensure that no one walks alone on the dementia journey. Now and in the coming days, we all need to come together to show people

affected by dementia that they're not alone. If you can give support safely to someone in need, please offer, and if you need help, please ask. Providing a sense of connection and support is often as easy as making a phone call.

This issue of *Connections* also explores how physical activity is essential to mental well-being. I encourage everyone of all abilities to consider ways to stay connected and physically active during this time. On May 31, we will join Alzheimer Societies across Canada for our first-ever online *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's* – an opportunity to be together and stay healthy while we're apart. Join us.



Maria Howard MBA, CCRC
Chief Executive Officer
Alzheimer Society of B.C.

May 31, 2020

THE WALK IS MOVING ONLINE!

Register to represent your community at walkforalzheimers.ca.

Caregiver perspective: Michael and Isabel Phillips



Michael and Isabel Phillips

Michael and Isabel Phillips live in Victoria and enjoy keeping physically active and engaged in their community. They are also members of Voices in Motion, a choir comprised of people living with dementia, caregivers and high school students.

When Isabel Phillips crossed the finish line at her first *Times Colonist* 10k, she took second place within her age category, but for her friends and family cheering for her on the sidelines, she had won. Isabel had been living with Alzheimer's disease for about seven years when she told her husband Michael she wanted to run the race. They joined a clinic together and Isabel ran every training kilometre to prepare – sometimes more when she'd unwittingly run off course and Michael would chase after her to bring her back into the group.

“She was so determined to do it to show that she could,” Michael says. “She’s pure grit and determination. That’s the way she’s fought this awful disease.”

Michael has been Isabel’s caregiver for the last decade, through mental and physical challenges that tested

both of their strength and determination. With Michael’s planning and Isabel’s drive, they’ve travelled the world together, swimming in Antarctica and ascending mountains in the Austrian countryside. Still, the first few years following Isabel’s diagnosis were an extremely difficult time for the couple, and one Michael got through with ongoing support and education from the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Michael and Isabel are now in a new stage in their journey together. After a decade of living with dementia at home with Michael as her primary caregiver, Isabel has moved into long-term care. There has been pain in letting go, but Michael reminds himself that Isabel is getting the level of care she needs and he can no longer provide. They still regularly walk the same roads they used to run together and even though Isabel may do more dancing than singing in the choir some days, they love it just as much as on Day 1.

“You don’t just quit,” Michael says. “It’s not the end of the world. It’s the start of something new.”



Michael and Isabel sang with the Voices in Motion choir at the Dementia-Friendly Legislature Luncheon in March 2019.

Celebrating Richmond volunteers

From fundraising to direct support, education to advocacy, the Alzheimer Society of B.C. could not provide its support for people affected by dementia without the endless dedication of volunteers connected to every aspect of our work across the province. Since last April, nearly 50 volunteers in Richmond have contributed over 2,300 hours of their time in roles ranging from support group facilitators and office assistants to workshop presenters and advocates in the community.

The Society is so grateful for all of the talented volunteers in Richmond who strive to make life better for people affected by dementia – people like Andrei Obratsov and Marjory Li.

Andrei was studying kinesiology in 2012 when he began volunteering as a Minds in Motion® assistant. He became an instructor for the fitness and social program in 2015 and continues to lead sessions at the South Arm Community Centre in Richmond.

“I like to give people the exercise that I believe is beneficial, but also enjoyable and safe – making sure they’re doing things they like,” Andrei says. “I find it very rewarding to participate, hear the stories and offer exercise to people of all different ability levels.”

It’s a relationship everyone learns from.

“You learn to be patient and understanding,” he says. “If you have these skills, you’ll make a difference in other people’s lives by helping out.”

While Andrei was first giving his time to Minds in Motion®, Marjory Li was retiring from her career as a registered nurse and looking for opportunities to give back. She wanted to engage the Chinese community with her language skills and started helping out with admin work at one of the Society’s resource centres.



Volunteers in Richmond celebrate at the 2019 IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's.

Staff saw Marjory’s abilities and it wasn’t long before they asked if she would consider giving her time to education. She now leads workshops on dementia and brain health.

“I took on the challenge and that’s how it began,” she says. “Knowledge is power and I would like to share what I know. By knowing the disease, people are able to handle it.”

Marjory considers herself blessed to be able to volunteer.

“I’m not young and I can’t take what I know with me,” she says. “I would like to leave it behind. That’s my gift for all my friends, my family and everyone who I may come into contact with.”

Andrei and Marjory are just two members of an incredible community of people who give their time to make Richmond more welcoming and supportive for people affected by dementia. To all of our dedicated and passionate volunteers in Richmond, thank you!

Learn more

To mark National Volunteer Week (April 19-25), we shared a series of stories about some of the volunteers making a difference for people living with dementia. Read them at alzbc.org/NVW20.

Caring for people living with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic

Health-care providers and families of people living with dementia, we're here for you!

Building a Strong
Foundation for Dementia Care

Health-Care Provider Education



Resources to support health-care providers

We have resources tailored to meet the needs of anyone working with people living with dementia. With changes to staffing and procedures across the health-care system, many people may be working with people living with dementia for the first time, or in a new role. Our guidebook, Building a Strong Foundation for Dementia Care, is available at alzbc.org/BSFDC and provides information on:

- Understanding dementia.
- Communicating with people living with dementia.
- Responding to behaviours common among people living with dementia.

In addition, Dementia Friendly Care Homes: Best Practices in Dementia Care, a new report outlining the ways care homes can be more dementia friendly, is available at: alzbc.org/DFCH-report.

We want to hear from health-care providers.

How has your role changed in this time of increased measures to stop the spread of COVID-19? What resources would help you support people living with dementia in your care? Have you made adjustments worth sharing with others facing the same challenges in continuing care? Share your questions, stories and strategies with us by completing short survey at alzbc.org/HCPsupport.

Resources for people caring for someone living with dementia

If a family member or friend lives with dementia, the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is here for you. Please call the **First Link® Dementia Helpline** and:

Join our webinars. They cover a range of topics related to caregiving, both at home, and long distance. Register at alzbc.org/webinars or check out recordings at alzbc.org/webinar-recordings.

Access online resources. Visit alzheimerbc.org for links to additional resources and the latest information about caring for someone during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The First Link® Dementia Helpline is for health-care providers and families. Helpline staff are equipped with the latest information on how to best provide person-centred care for people living with dementia in any situation. Health-care providers seeking answers to general questions, as well as advice related to specific concerns or scenarios, are encouraged to call the Helpline. We're here to help Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m. in English (1-800-936-6033) and from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. in Cantonese or Mandarin (1-833-674-5007) and Punjabi (1-833-674-5003).

Get moving! The link between exercise and brain health

Research indicates that people who exercise regularly are less likely to develop heart disease, stroke and diabetes, which are all linked with an increased risk of dementia. Physical activity can also improve mood and confidence, reduce the risk of falls by improving strength and balance and help to keep bones strong. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend adults engage in at least 150 minutes of aerobic physical activity per week, in sessions of 10 minutes or more at a time.

Spotlight on B.C. research

A recent publication by a team including UBC researcher Dr. Teresa Liu-Ambrose and PhD candidate Ryan Falck looked at the role of exercise training on physical and brain function among older adults.

What type of study was it?

This study was a systematic review and meta-analysis, meaning it was a review of existing studies to provide a summary of the overall research on the topic. Combined, the 58 studies included in this meta-analysis spanned a 30-year period and had a total of 6,281 participants from 13 countries. The average age of study participants was 73.

What did they find?

The researchers found that exercise training is effective in promoting both physical and brain health in older adults. They also found that improvements in muscle strength, flexibility and balance were associated with improvements in brain function, meaning an increase in one led to an increase in the other. The team found that regular exercise brings benefits regardless of age or sex.



What are the recommendations?

Based on their findings, the researchers recommend engaging in a mix of aerobic and resistance training. Aerobic training includes cardiovascular-focused exercises such as walking, running or dance, while resistance training is exercise focused on increasing muscular strength or endurance by using items like weights or resistance bands.

“The body and the brain are connected and what happens in the body impacts the brain,” Falck says. “Even in older adults with less mobility, low-intensity physical activity is shown to be beneficial. Anyone can start any time to begin seeing improvements in thinking, moving and overall well-being.”

Learn more

Read more about the study at alzbc.org/exercise-study.

Exercise tips

- Add intensity to exercise where possible. This can be as simple as choosing a walking route with hills or picking up the pace between light posts.
- Choose activities you enjoy! Some possibilities you may wish to try are walking, gardening, seated exercises and yoga, dance or tai chi/ qigong depending on your interests and abilities.
- In later stages of dementia, people living with dementia should be encouraged to stand and move about regularly and sit unsupported (with supervision) for a few minutes per day to strengthen stomach and back muscles.
- Consult your doctor before starting a new exercise routine. If an exercise is painful or makes you feel unwell while taking part, stop the exercise and seek medical advice.

Activities to try while physical distancing

The physical distancing requirements for COVID-19 bring unique challenges, including isolation and disruption to normal routines. Here are a few ideas of activities to engage in from the safety of your own home that can help caregivers and people living with dementia remain cognitively stimulated and engaged.

At home

- Try a new baking or cooking recipe together.
- Read a favourite novel aloud together or listen to it as an audio book through [Audible.ca](https://www.audible.ca) or [Scribd.com](https://www.scribd.com), online or through apps.
- Connect with friends and family members via phone calls, video chats or by writing letters.

In your own backyard

- Take a walk around your neighbourhood together – just make sure you give other walkers lots of physical space. Look for details you haven't noticed before. Try looking for different colours or numbers on your walk or seeing how many of one item you can find (i.e. locksmith stickers, bird nests, fallen branches, red cars, etc.).
- Create a bird feeder and watch the birds that visit.

- At nighttime, download a stargazing application for your smartphone to help identify the stars in the night sky. Or, look up upcoming space station sighting opportunities for your location on NASA's Spot the Station website at spotthestation.nasa.gov/sightings.

On a virtual tour

- Browse through online exhibitions at the Canadian Museum of History at [HistoryMuseum.ca](https://www.historymuseum.ca) and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights at [HumanRights.ca](https://www.humanrights.ca).
- Watch sea otters frolic at the Vancouver Aquarium at [VanAqua.org](https://www.vancouveraquarium.org).
- Search for a virtual hike, like trips to Moraine Lake or Kenai Fjords National Park in Alaska.

Taking time to reminisce

- Try looking through or creating new photo albums, making a family tree, creating a playlist of significant songs or going through a jewelry box and discussing where different pieces came from. Websites like [Shutterfly.com](https://www.shutterstock.com) also allow you to make photo albums online and have the book printed and sent to you.

Stay connected through webinars

We are eager to continue providing support for caregivers and people living with dementia, despite the temporary suspension of our in-person programming due to the COVID-19 outbreak. For this reason, we will be holding webinars with increased frequency, including:

- **Wednesday, April 29 at 2 p.m.:** Managing responsive behaviours in a rapidly-changing environment (30 minutes)
- **Wednesday, May 6 at 2 p.m.:** Staying healthy in a time of change and uncertainty: Self care for caregivers and people living with dementia (30 minutes)

- **Wednesday, May 13 at 2 or 7 p.m.:** Long-distance caregiving (60 minutes)

To register for a webinar, please go to alzbc.org/webinars or call the First Link® Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033 Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Registration is available through Cantonese or Mandarin and Punjabi Helplines; however, webinars are only offered in English at this time. All webinars, including on caregiving during COVID-19 and activities to do at home, are recorded and available on our YouTube channel at alzbc.org/webinar-recordings.



First Link®
DEMENTIA HELPLINE

Questions about dementia or memory loss?

English: 1-800-936-6033
Cantonese or Mandarin: 1-833-674-5007
Punjabi: 1-833-674-5003

English: Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Cantonese or Mandarin and Punjabi: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



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- **Online** at alzbc.org/connections-newsletter
- **Email** newsletter@alzheimerbc.org
- **Call** 604-681-6530; 1-800-667-3742 (toll-free)
- **Mail** to the Alzheimer Society of B.C.
300-828 West 8th Avenue,
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

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Are you a person living with dementia?

We also publish *Insight*, a publication for people living with dementia or cognitive impairment. For more information, visit alzbc.org/insight-newsletter.



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