



The link between hearing impairment and dementia

As we move into the fall, we continue to face the challenges and uncertainty of life during COVID-19 for people affected by dementia. In this issue of *Insight*, we share valuable information about the link between hearing impairment and dementia, as well as stories from people living with the disease. Myrna Norman interviews a health-care provider about caring for people living with dementia. We also share excerpts from our “Dementia in the days of COVID-19” series that highlighted how people affected by dementia around the province continue to cope with the pandemic.

Stay connected remotely

We have virtual support available for anyone affected by dementia. This includes our social and fitness program Minds in Motion® online, telephone or video support groups for people living with early-stage dementia as well as caregivers and online resources, including weekly webinars. To learn more, or access any of our services, please call the First Link® Dementia Helpline (see page 8) or visit alzheimerbc.org.

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Contact us to share your story in *Insight*

Welcome to *Insight*, the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s newsletter for and by people living with dementia. Over the years, many courageous contributors have shared their personal experiences of living with dementia in the pages of *Insight* to support others living with the disease and to address stigma. The publication would not be possible without their generosity and dedication. People have given their photography, poetry, personal writing and, most often, their time by participating in interviews with Society staff members who strive to accurately reflect their experiences in writing.

This issue of *Insight* includes more contributions from Myrna Norman, a member of the Society's Leadership Group of People Living with Dementia. We are excited to share her interviews and ideas, alongside interviews with others who have chosen to speak up about their realities of living with dementia during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful for all of these stories and hope they will inspire more of our readers to contact us and contribute to the newsletter.

Do you have a personal story to share or questions you would like to ask other people living with dementia? What advice would you give to others who may be facing similar challenges during this uncertain time? Please send us your feedback, story ideas, art or interest in being interviewed. Everyone's journey with dementia is unique and everyone has a story to tell.



Get in touch

We welcome all ideas and contributions from people living with dementia. Please provide your name, mailing address, phone number and/or email address if you would like to be contacted. All submissions will be considered based on theme and space.

Email your ideas or contributions to:
insight@alzheimerbc.org

Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free
1-800-667-3742

Mail to the Alzheimer Society of B.C.,
care of *Insight*: 300-828 West 8th
Avenue Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

Hearing loss and dementia

Did you know hearing impairment has been identified as a risk factor for cognitive decline and dementia? Read more to learn about hearing impairment, hearing aids and where you can go to take the next step if you're noticing changes in your hearing.

What causes hearing loss?

The most common causes of hearing loss are:

- **Noise.** The exposure to loud noises over time can slowly change the structure of the inner ear. To prevent noise-related hearing loss, avoid loud noises, turn the volume down and wear hearing protection when appropriate.
- **Age.** As we age, changes to the inner ear can happen and cause a slow but steady loss of hearing.
- Other causes of hearing loss can include an object in the ear, injury to the ear or head, earwax buildup or an ear infection, among others.

Hearing aids

Hearing aids do not cure hearing loss, but instead amplify sounds that a person is having trouble hearing. They are small battery-powered devices that vary in size, features and the way they're placed in the ear.

Hearing aids have come a long way in appearance, function and technology. Today's hearing aids are smaller and more inconspicuous than ever with

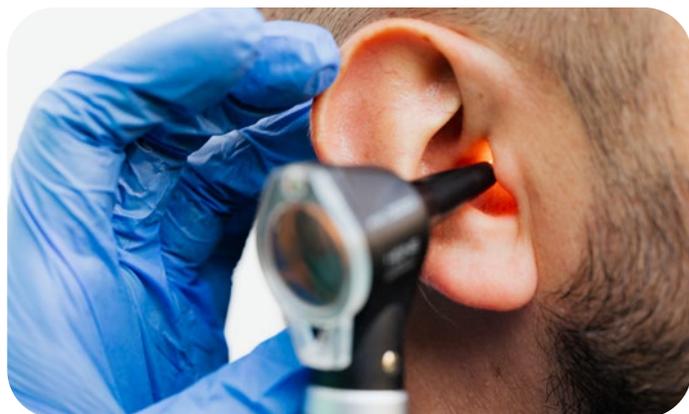
different features such as background noise reduction, rechargeable batteries or new wireless capabilities like Bluetooth, allowing them to be synched directly to a smartphone.

Where to go to take the next step

You may wish to start a conversation about changes you're experiencing with a health-care provider who can do a physical examination.

Additionally, in B.C. you can book a hearing test appointment directly with an audiologist or hearing instrument practitioner without a referral. Keep in mind that services with these professionals, as well as hearing aids, are typically not covered under B.C.'s Medical Services Plan (MSP). Some private insurance will cover all or part of the cost of hearing tests and hearing aids.

You can also dial HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 (or 7-1-1 for the deaf and hard of hearing) to speak to a health service navigator and registered nurse to talk about next steps. Translation services are available for HealthLink BC in 130 languages.



Person-centred dementia care: A health-care provider's perspective



Myrna Norman, a member of the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s Leadership Group of People Living with Dementia, recently spoke with Teri Willey, a health-care worker

based in Kamloops, about what drew her to the role and how she works with people living with dementia to provide person-centred care. Teri, who has a background in business, made a later-in-life career change and now supports people living in long-term care, including people living with dementia.

Can you describe yourself in five words?

I am patient, compassionate, stubborn. I have kind eyes and a big heart.

What was the reason you went into long-term care and where did you get your training?

I got into long-term care because I wanted to give back and do something meaningful. I took my training at Academy of Learning in Kamloops, B.C.

Were you trained in dementia care?

There is definitely a dementia section in the training. I have also attended additional dementia seminars.

What strategies do you use for toileting, for bathing and for calming an angry patient?

I try to spend a few minutes with the client first to gain some trust and create a bond using calmness and kindness.

Can you describe the most difficult situation you have dealt with?

The most difficult situation I have dealt with, with a client living with dementia, was while I was doing a visit. The client dozed off in his chair and woke up thinking he was at a horrific job scene. (He was a retired frontline worker.) He was yelling at me to call 911. I had to calm him and redirect his focus.

What are the gifts you get from caring for people living with dementia?

The gifts I get from caring for people living with dementia are their smiles and the hand squeezes, gaining their trust, even if it's just for a few minutes. I am rewarded and grateful for what I do every day!

What would your words of advice be to someone looking after a loved one at home by themselves?

My advice is that it's OK to ask for help. You can't do it alone. Take things in stride day by day.

Person-centred dementia care: A health-care provider's perspective, continued



What do you like to do in your time off?

I like quiet time by myself on days off and I also like to spend time with family and friends (a good balance). I love to camp and sit by the fire, read and enjoy a glass or two of red wine.

What are your favourite memories shared with elders?

My favourite memories shared with elders are letting them talk and reminisce about their childhood or their younger years. I have always loved talking to elders. I love to see their faces light up while they tell a story.

When you come home after a long day at work, what is the first thing you do?

The first thing I do when I get home from a long day at work is have a hot shower and reflect on my day. Could I have done something differently? How can I make it better for next time?

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. welcomes new CEO, Jen Lyle



The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is pleased to welcome Jen Lyle to the position of Chief Executive Officer. On August 3, she took over the role from

Barbara Lindsay, the Society's Director of Advocacy & Education and Marketing & Communications teams, who has led the organization as

interim CEO since October 2020. Members of our community may be familiar with Jen through SafeCare BC, a non-profit workplace health and safety association for B.C.'s continuing care sector where she held the role of CEO since 2014. Jen is a long-time collaborator with the Society, including through the development of foundational dementia education for health-care providers.

Dementia in the days of COVID-19

In the spring of 2020, we began sharing stories of how the pandemic was affecting people living with dementia and those who care for them in our “Dementia in the days of COVID-19” series. This summer we continued the series through a collection of interviews exploring the ongoing challenges and successes people affected by dementia are facing, and their reflections from an unprecedented year of increased isolation.

The series includes interviews with caregivers and people living with dementia in the community. It also includes interviews with B.C. Seniors Advocate Isobel Mackenzie and Erin Beaudoin, the CEO of Eden Gardens, a continuing care community for people living with dementia that, like so many care homes in the province, was profoundly impacted by restrictions to visitation. Below are excerpts from the series, which is available at alzbc.org/COVID-stories.

Linda and Ruth’s update: One year later



Last December, Linda Hodgkin was Christmas shopping in Courtenay with her friend Ruth Seabloom when

the two became separated. Suddenly Linda, who lives with vascular dementia, couldn’t find the car or Ruth. She didn’t know where to go or what to do. As she grew exceedingly anxious, a young woman working in a nearby salon spotted

Linda and offered to walk around the town centre with her until they found Ruth. It wasn’t long before they did – but the encounter has had a lasting effect.

“That had a very big impact on me,” says Linda, who lives alone with her miniature schnauzer Bentley. “I have more confidence in myself now knowing that there is community support.”

It was evidence that people will step up to help out, and that she can make it through difficult situations. This last year has been an ongoing difficult situation, with many of the routines and tools that Linda relies on to live well curtailed due to COVID-19. She loved in-person card making, hand drumming and Girl Guiding meetups. These activities just weren’t the same over Zoom. Even the word “Zoom” is something Linda would rather go without at this point in the pandemic. Instead of focusing on the losses, however, Linda is spending more time gardening, riding her bike, kayaking (sometimes with Bentley) and creating processes that allow her to remain independent with support from Ruth.

Craig’s update: One year later



While so much has been delayed or postponed due to the pandemic, in Craig Burns’ world, COVID has brought with it big changes. Last spring Craig, who lives on his own with young onset Alzheimer’s disease, was participating in dementia

Dementia in the days of COVID-19, continued

research, volunteering virtually, working out and finding ways to stay connected with his friends. A year later, Craig was still keeping busy with the same itinerary, while he also prepared to move into an independent living home, a decision he describes as proactive and positive.

“I’m the one initiating it and I think that makes a big difference,” Craig says. “I’m being positive about the whole thing. I know it’s time for me to make a move.”

His new home offers options to live independently, with assistance or, for some residents, complex care – a range of support he doesn’t need yet, but he’s happy to have available to him as the symptoms of dementia progress and he makes advance care plans.

Something else has influenced Craig’s discussions about the future with the family. On May 1, the last of Craig’s six grandchildren was born. “I call them my six pack,” he says. “There’s nothing like new life to show us how beautiful life is and what we can do.”

How are you coping during COVID-19?

How have you managed stress or connected with others while many activities and routines remain on hold? Do you have experiences or tips to share with others living with dementia? We want to hear from you. Contact us at insight@alzheimerbc.org.

Dementia awareness around the world: Japan

If you take a walk around Matsudo City in Japan, people in bright orange vests, handing out dementia leaflets and assisting those in need may catch your attention. These volunteers are part of Japan’s Orange Plan, a project aimed at creating dementia-friendly communities by raising awareness to support those living with dementia. It started in 2015 and includes education for businesses like banks and taxi services, dementia drop-in centres and even cafés for people living with dementia and their caregivers to talk openly and at their own pace.

Volunteers check in on residents and notify authorities if they notice unusual behaviour, such as a built-up pile of newspapers or drawn curtains during

the day. The volunteers also hand out QR codes that can be ironed onto clothing. These codes can then be scanned and used to help police locate the families of people who have become disoriented or lost. This dementia-friendly community aims to offer the support necessary to help people continue to live in their own homes.



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- Subscribe online at alzbc.org/insight-newsletter
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742

Contribute

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Call the First Link® Dementia Helpline

A confidential, province-wide support and information service for anyone with questions about dementia. Our English Helpline runs from 9 a.m. until 8 p.m., Monday to Friday. Cantonese or Mandarin and Punjabi Helplines are open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday to Friday.

- English: 1-800-936-6033
 - Punjabi: 1-833-674-5003
 - Cantonese or Mandarin: 1-833-674-5007
- Email supportline@alzheimerbc.org

Are you a caregiver?

Connections is a quarterly print and digital publication produced by the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

To subscribe:

- Visit our website at alzbc.org/connections-newsletter
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