

# In the LOOP

WINTER 2024

*Société*  
**Alzheimer**  
*Society*

NOVA SCOTIA



In this issue:

- January is Alzheimer Awareness Month
- Clare MacDonald Day at Truro Raceway
- Tips For Dementia Friendly Interactions

...and more!

# WINTER 2024

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Questions about  
dementia?  
We are here to help.

Our province-wide Dementia  
Helpline is a confidential  
service provided by our team of  
knowledgeable and caring staff.

**Dementia Helpline**  
**1-800-611-6345**

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# Message from John Britton, CEO

It's hard to believe 2023 has come to a close, and we are already looking ahead to 2024 and beyond.

For those that have been connected to us for a while, you will have seen the development of our strategic plan take place over the last few years – a plan that is heavily informed by the first volume of the Landmark Study, released in September 2022. It included startling projections for dementia in Nova Scotia over the coming decades.

We know we need to do more with direct supports and services. We also need to further invest in access to supports in the community, continuous development of culturally appropriate services and information, and access to a diagnosis. We're excited to keep you informed of how we plan to do this as 2024 progresses.

To truly support the ever-increasing number of people living with dementia, we are committed to our aspirational goal of a dementia friendly Nova Scotia. We want those affected to live as well as possible, for as long as possible, in the places they call home. That's why we are thrilled to expand our Dementia Friendly Communities initiative this year to further empower service providers and businesses to operate with a dementia-friendly lens. It's just one of several major initiatives designed to empower and impact at community level, and to advance our role in advocacy.

We've learned a LOT over the past few years, as the world around us shifts and changes, and the needs of people affected by dementia change as a result. One thing that has remained constant is the unwavering support of our Society friends – people like you, who are so generous in sharing their time and talent as volunteers or partners, or their treasure as donors and sponsors, or sharing their lived experience.

We're entering our 41st year of dementia support, information, and education and we really couldn't do it without you. The updates and impacts contained in these pages are testament to that – and we have you to thank!

Here's to a dementia friendly 2024!



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Britton'.

**John Britton**

**CEO, Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia**



**We would love to hear your feedback! Send us an email at [alzheimer@asns.ca](mailto:alzheimer@asns.ca).**

# January is Alzheimer Awareness Month

## This year, we're talking about reducing your risk of dementia

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The number of people living with dementia is rising. By the year 2050, more than 1.7 million people are expected to be living with dementia in our country, nearly 30,000 in Nova Scotia alone.

But there is hope. Together, we can take action to reduce our own dementia risk.

While some risk factors for dementia - like age and genetics - can't be changed, there are many ways you can take action to reduce your overall risk at any age or stage of your life. Those already diagnosed with dementia can also benefit from taking these actions and improving their brain health.

Did you know that addressing risk factors could reduce the prevalence of dementia in Canada by up to 40 per cent? Check out the 10 ways to reduce your risk of dementia on the next page.

Throughout Awareness Month, we hope you'll join the conversation – online, on social media, or even just with your friends – and share how everyone can take steps to reduce their risk of dementia. Find more details and resources at [www.alzheimer.ca/ns/riskreduction](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns/riskreduction).

We recognize that a number of these actions include consultation with a primary care provider, something that many do not have access to. We encourage you to utilize virtual care or walk in clinics where possible.

Individual circumstances play a major role in one's ability to manage risk factors. Physical, mental and financial wellbeing, access to services, a support system and countless other things can impact our ability to make lifestyle changes to reduce our risk of dementia and other health conditions. Our risk is modifiable with the right supports in place - if you're not sure where to start, contact our Dementia Helpline at 1-800-611-6345.

# 10 Ways to Reduce Your Risk of Dementia

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## Be physically active each day

Get moving! Any physical activity is better than none at all.



## Protect and support your hearing

Hearing loss in midlife can increase dementia risk by an average of 90%. Use hearing aids if needed – they help reduce that risk.



## Stay socially active

Stay connected and engaged with your family, friends and community. Social isolation in later life can increase dementia risk by an average of 60%.



## Manage your medical conditions

In collaboration with your health-care provider, try to manage complex conditions such as diabetes and obesity as best you can.



## Quit or reduce smoking

Get support in quitting or reducing smoking. Even in later life, these steps can improve your brain health and reduce your dementia risk.



## Seek support for depression

Depression is more than just feeling sad. Seeking depression treatment and support will help improve your mood and brain functioning.



## Drink less alcohol

Drinking more than 12 standard drinks a week in midlife increases dementia risk by an average of 20%. If you need help in quitting or limiting alcohol, speak with your health-care provider.



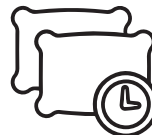
## Protect your heart

Working with your health-care provider, monitor and manage your blood pressure and heart health. What's good for the heart is also good for the brain!



## Avoid concussion and traumatic brain injury

Steer clear of activities where you might put your brain at risk of harm. Play, travel and work safe!



## Aim to get quality sleep

Work toward sleeping well for 6 to 8 hours each night. If you experience sleep apnea or other sleep issues, talk to your health-care provider for treatment options.

**Every action counts. Learn more at [alzheimer.ca/ns/riskreduction](https://alzheimer.ca/ns/riskreduction).**

  June 2023, Alzheimer Society of Canada.

# HYPE vs HOPE

IN DEMENTIA RESEARCH

JANUARY 30, 2024 | 6PM-8PM

PAUL O'REGAN HALL  
HALIFAX CENTRAL LIBRARY  
WITH VIRTUAL LIVESTREAM

Join us this Alzheimer Awareness Month for a chance to ask local clinicians and academics about dementia research. We will discuss ideas that need more evidence (hype) as well as promising projects and initiatives (hope).



**DR. MELISSA ANDREW**  
Professor of  
Geriatric Medicine,  
Dalhousie



**DR. SULTAN DARVESH**  
Neurologist & Maritime  
Brain Tissue Bank  
Director, Dalhousie



**DR. JANICE KEEFE**  
Gerontologist & Nova  
Scotia Centre on Aging  
Director, MSVU



**DR. SUSAN BOWLES**  
Geriatric  
Pharmacotherapy  
Specialist, Dalhousie



**DR. ELAINE MOODY**  
School of Nursing  
Assistant Professor,  
Dalhousie



**DR. KATIE AUBRECHT**  
Sociologist &  
Spatializing Care Lab  
Director, St. FX

The panel will be followed by an interactive Q&A session.  
Visit [ALZHEIMER.CA/NS/PANEL2024](https://ALZHEIMER.CA/NS/PANEL2024) to learn more and register for this FREE event.

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# Clare MacDonald Day at Truro Raceway

Lauren Barron

Annual Giving Coordinator

Community support never ceases to amaze us here at the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia. We provide support to people across our province, and we are so grateful for the community support that is reciprocated back to us. One example of this community support comes from Clare MacDonald and the Truro Raceway, who hosted a unique fundraiser in support of the Society this September.

Sunday, September 10 was Clare MacDonald Day at the Truro Raceway. A day to celebrate the incredible career of Mary Clare "Clare" MacDonald, Canada's winningest female harness driver in both victories and purse earnings. Clare is an incredibly accomplished and generous individual who decided to support a cause she believed in. On her day, Clare chose to support the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia, and to work with the Truro Raceway to make this happen. The weather was beautiful while fans and the the community showed up to celebrate and support Clare's mission to raise funds for the Society. Participants enjoyed all kinds of fundraising opportunities such as race sponsorships, commemorative t-shirt and poster sales, a silent auction, and a 50/50 draw donated by the Truro Harness Horse Owners Association. All of this, in addition to donations from Clare's generous fans and supporters, raised a grand total of \$11,283.50 for the Society. What an incredible success!

These funds will make a tremendous difference to the lives of Nova Scotians affected by dementia. We would like to extend a huge thank you to Clare MacDonald, Steve Fitzsimmons, and the Truro Raceway for your efforts and incredible support. We would also like to thank all those who showed up to Truro Raceway and participated in Clare MacDonald Day. This show of community support and generosity is felt throughout the province, and it means more than we can express.

To learn more about how to get involved in hosting a fundraiser to support the Society, please visit [www.alzheimer.ca/ns/fundraise](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns/fundraise) or call us at 1-800-611-6345.



Steve Fitzsimmons presents Alzheimer Society staff with a cheque for the funds raised at Clare MacDonald Day.

# Dr. Natalie Phillips - First Student Award Recipient is a Research Trailblazer

**Emma Churchill**

Co-op Student, Communications & Marketing

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We are delighted to spotlight the remarkable career of Dr. Natalie Phillips, PhD, Professor in the Department of Psychology at Concordia University, the Associate Scientific Director of the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration and Aging (CCNA), and the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia's first Phyllis Horton Student Research Award recipient.

Dr. Phillips's academic journey began at Dalhousie University, where she pursued an undergraduate degree before earning a PhD in clinical psychology. It was during this time that she developed a deep interest in aging and age-related diseases. Her experiences growing up in a large family, surrounded by older adults, fueled her passion for understanding the complexities of the aging brain.

Dr. Phillips said that the Phyllis Horton Award from the Society provided a crucial stepping stone in support for her research. Reflecting on this, she emphasized the importance of recognizing and supporting researchers in the field, acknowledging that even small contributions can make a significant impact.

After receiving the Phyllis Horton Research Award and graduating from Dalhousie, Dr. Phillips moved to Montreal, securing a faculty position at Concordia University. She focused her research on aging and Alzheimer's disease, eventually establishing an independent research lab where she mentors aspiring researchers.

Dr. Phillips was a part of a major Canadian achievement. Collaborating with Dr. Howard Chertkow and Ziad Nasreddine, they together designed the Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA). This screening tool has become globally recognized for detecting mild cognitive impairment, an early clinical stage of Alzheimer's disease.

In 2013, talks began about the CCNA, which is a nationwide hub of dementia researchers. This was funded for the first time in 2014 and has recently finished its second five-year cycle. It has supported researchers in dementia across Canada and is now receiving \$40 million from CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) and Associated Partners for this cycle.





Dr. Phillips's lab is actively involved in the COMPASS-ND study, a nationwide examination of participants with dementia or at risk. They focus on demographics, brain imaging, and genetics, emphasizing sensory abilities as risk factors for dementia. Notably, hearing loss is considered one of the 12 modifiable risk factors for dementia. Dr. Phillips emphasizes the importance of understanding lifestyle factors associated with cognitive outcomes, advocating for positive health behaviours from an early age.

Her message to aspiring researchers is to remember that life is a journey with multiple paths and do not be afraid to explore options and take many paths. She credits the mentorship she received during her clinical PhD at Dalhousie as instrumental, highlighting the significance of the support she received since the beginning and recognizes how it shaped her career.

From a modest research award to leading a multi-million-dollar consortium, Dr. Natalie Phillips exemplifies the transformative impact of investing in research. Her story shows how crucial it is to support researchers, promote positive change, and appreciate the valuable contributions of scientists. Initial small investments can really influence the trajectory of someone's career. The next bright mind could be your neighbour, friend, or even you!

Our student research awards are still going strong 29 years later. Applications for this year's awards are currently open. Visit [www.alzheimer.ca/ns/researchawards](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns/researchawards) to learn more and apply today.



# SAVE THE DATE

The IG Wealth Management  
Walk for Alzheimer's is  
happening in regions across  
the province on:

**Sunday, May 26, 2024!**

Stay tuned for the launch of  
our website and registration.



# Support For Dementia Caregivers

**Catherine Shepherd**

Regional Coordinator, Cape Breton  
Provincial Lead, First Link® Outreach

*Originally published in  
the Cape Breton Post*

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Receiving a diagnosis of dementia or supporting someone with a diagnosis of dementia can be overwhelming. Navigating the system, learning about the condition, finding out what is available and how to access support can be even more overwhelming. This is something that we hear often.

We also hear that dementia can leave you feeling isolated. Whether you are the person with the condition or the person supporting them, we want you to know that you are not alone. There are other people on the journey with you.

One of the ways that the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia is working to help care partners in our province is to offer dementia specific Caregiver Support Groups.

These groups offer a safe and confidential space for people who are supporting someone with dementia to come together and talk. You can ask the hard questions, share your experience with others and find support in knowing that you are not alone. A support group offers the ability to exchange information and understanding with others who are experiencing this condition.

“We hear from many caregivers that our support groups are invaluable,” says Donna Lawrence, Regional Coordinator at the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia and support group facilitator. “They didn’t know they needed it until they attended.”

These groups can provide a place to talk with others who understand what you are going through. People who attend often share that they are nervous when they first come, but once there, it becomes a relaxing and safe space. They also say that attending helped to decrease feelings of loneliness and reassured them that what they are feeling is normal. It is also a great way to learn about trusted resources as well as upcoming events.

It is always emphasized that attendees do not have to speak, they can sit and take in what the group shares. If they feel like they would like to talk, the opportunity is always available.

“Participating in the support group is very heartwarming for me,” says Jody MacDonald, a support group facilitator. “The dementia journey is often difficult for everyone involved. The support group provides education, but also supports the people on this journey. The caregivers’ stories are so touching, and they are often supporting each other.”

In Sydney, there is a group that meets in person. There are additional groups that meet in-person across the province, and others that meet online. Find dates and times on our website at [www.alzheimer.ca/ns/caregiver-support-groups](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns/caregiver-support-groups).



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### Caregiver Support Groups

Caregiver Support Groups are safe places for people supporting someone with dementia to come together regularly for mutual care and support. These confidential groups provide space to talk, listen and share information, tips and strategies. Groups are facilitated in a non-judgemental, respectful atmosphere. You are not alone.

Call 1-800-611-6345 to register

## SAVE THE DATE: Early Stage Forum

Our annual Early Stage Forum will be held both virtually and in-person on April 13, 2024! Stay tuned for further details.

This event is for people living with dementia and their care partners to hear from others who are living with dementia.

[www.alzheimer.ca/ns](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns) | 1-800-611-6345.





# Tips For Dementia Friendly Interactions

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Creating a dementia friendly community goes beyond physical spaces. It extends to every interaction and communication. Here, we share valuable tips to enhance interactions with individuals living with dementia, fostering inclusivity, understanding, and empathy.

## Offer appropriate help:

- Wear a nametag to identify yourself as someone who can help.
- Approach individuals from the front in a friendly and open manner.
- Remove hats and sunglasses to make facial expressions more visible.

Incorporating these tips into everyday interactions contributes to a more supportive and inclusive dementia friendly community. When interacting with individuals living with dementia:

## Enhance your own communication:

- Face the person, make eye contact (or adjust to eye level if needed), and speak directly to them.
- Speak slowly and clearly in a pleasant tone, using short, simple sentences.
- Avoid slang, jargon, and metaphors that could be misinterpreted.
- Ask closed-ended questions, allowing time for responses.
- Consider taking the person to a quiet space to reduce distractions.

## Enhancing communication on the phone:

- Find the best time to call and introduce yourself.
- Break down information into smaller pieces.
- Repeat calmly if necessary and encourage writing down information.
- Send follow-up emails, texts, or letters for reference.

## Support the person's reality:

- Recognize the person's perception of the situation.
- Connect rather than correct; focus on their feelings and needs.
- Observe actions and body language for additional cues.
- Avoid multitasking requests; allow them to focus on one thing at a time.

### Supporting someone who is lost/wandering:

- Stop, introduce yourself, and explain why you're approaching.
- Ask how you can help and speak slowly and clearly.
- Stay with the person if possible, avoiding crowding.
- Alert your manager or call emergency services if needed.

Embracing these practices ensures that every interaction becomes an opportunity to build a supportive and understanding community for individuals living with dementia. Let's foster a culture of empathy and inclusion in our everyday interactions, shaping a more compassionate society for everyone.

## Dementia Friendly Communities

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## SUPPORTIVE, RESPECTFUL, INCLUSIVE



A Dementia Friendly Community supports, respects and includes people living with dementia and their partners in care in the places they live, work and play. It's a community that values contribution, opportunity and choice.

[www.alzheimer.ca/ns/dfc](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns/dfc)



### Dear reader,

As the current Chair of the Board of Directors for the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia, I want to thank you for your ongoing support of the work being done right here in our province. Together, we are making a profound difference in the lives of those living with dementia.

Over the last year, the Society has reflected on four decades of impact in Nova Scotia. It has been incredibly insightful to connect with longstanding volunteers, donors and team members involved in research and service delivery. I hope you've had the opportunity to hear from Kevin Keefe, our first Board President, and Mark Gillis, our most recent Board Chair, both of whom remain allies in our efforts to advocate for improved diagnosis and dementia care.



While it has been an important year to celebrate our history, there is much work ahead to ensure every Nova Scotian has access to the support they need. The recently released Landmark Study highlighted the staggering projections as we look to 2050, with a clear call to action for more research, education and advocacy. The Society and our Board are united in our commitment to enhance the quality of life of people living with dementia. We are stepping fully into our role as a trusted partner, service provider and advocate while at the same time increasing resources to champion brain health and reduce the stigma associated with a diagnosis.

**Our continued mission—providing help for today and hope for tomorrow—is a direct reflection of community need, and we need your help.**

Taking action can take many forms including organizing a fundraiser, signing up a team in our annual walk, being an advocate for brain health in your community, volunteering as a public education presenter, sharing your experience with dementia, or joining our community of donors. While the gifts we receive vary in size, every donor shares a sense of purpose in lighting the path for improved dementia care in Nova Scotia. With your financial donation, we will:

- Create communities of practice through initiatives directed at communities, healthcare teams, municipalities and businesses
- Change the conversation about dementia through public education focused on brain health and reducing stigma
- Shape the future through research and collaborative advocacy that involves the voices of those with lived experience

Because a diagnosis can happen to me, to you, to someone we love, and certainly to someone we know. I invite you to join us in this important work. And finally, as we embark on a new year, it is important to acknowledge that Winter can be an isolating time for those facing a diagnosis or providing care for a person living with dementia. If you or someone you know are feeling alone or uncertain about a next step, I encourage you to call the Dementia Helpline toll-free 1-800-611-6345.

Thank you,

**Lindsay Cross, Board Chair**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Full mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Yes!** I would love to make a donation to support Nova Scotians living with dementia.

I'd like to make a one-time tax-deductible contribution of:

☐ \$20    ☐ \$50    ☐ \$100    ☐ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

I would like to support the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia with a **monthly** gift of:

☐ \$10    ☐ \$20    ☐ \$50    ☐ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*You can stop your monthly gift at anytime by contacting us by phone or email.*

### PAYMENT INFORMATION:

☐ Please charge my donation to my:

☐ Visa    ☐ MasterCard    ☐ AMEX

Cardholder name: \_\_\_\_\_

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ CVC: \_\_\_\_

Cardholder signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

☐ I have enclosed a cheque payable to the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia

**Thank you!** Please return to 112-2719 Gladstone St, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3K 4W6. You can also make your secure donation at [www.alzheimer.ca/ns/donate](http://www.alzheimer.ca/ns/donate).

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902-422-7961 or 1-800-611-6345 (toll free within NS)

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