

Breakthrough in Alzheimer’s Disease Treatment: Alzheimer Society of Ontario Applauds US Approval of Game-Changing Disease-Modifying Therapy

*First-ever full approval paves the way for widespread access to lecanemab for US residents—
Sparking hope for Canadians*

TORONTO, ON, July 6, 2023—The Alzheimer Society of Ontario welcomes today’s US FDA decision to grant full approval to lecanemab (brand name: Leqembi), a disease-modifying therapy for Alzheimer’s disease. This marks the first full approval of any treatment for Alzheimer’s disease globally, and marks the latest positive step forward for research into therapeutic and diagnosis options.

“Helplessness is steadily giving way to hope,” said Cathy Barrick, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario. “While we have always been able to lower our risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease through lifestyle choices, the emergence of safe, effective treatments gives health care providers and families additional options to live well with Alzheimer’s disease—and for the first time ever, to slow progression of the disease itself.”

Today’s traditional approval follows the accelerated approval granted to Leqembi in January of this year, and is a sign of confidence in the treatment’s ability to alter the trajectory of Alzheimer’s disease in some individuals at the earliest stages. Leqembi was submitted to Health Canada for review in May 2023; there are currently no treatments for Alzheimer’s disease itself, rather than its underlying symptoms, approved for use in Canada.

Treatment options currently available in the US, including Leqembi, must all be administered early in the progression of Alzheimer’s disease—which necessitates early detection and diagnosis. Research out of the University of Southern California released in 2022 shows that Ontario is ill-prepared for the imminent arrival of disease-modifying therapies: with the introduction of a treatment in Ontario, wait times to receive a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease would skyrocket to seven and a half years. That is longer than many who seek a diagnosis will live—and far too long for treatments to be effective.

“We have had years of advance notice that treatment options for Alzheimer’s disease are coming to Ontario,” continued Ms. Barrick. “There is no excuse not to be ready: ready with infusion capacity, diagnostic infrastructure, primary care education. One-in-three adults in Ontario has a close family member living with dementia; they are expecting their government to make available the quality of care their loved ones expect and deserve.”

As with all drugs of its type, Leqembi comes with associated risks. Anyone considering treatment options for Alzheimer’s disease should speak with their health care provider.

About the Alzheimer Society of Ontario

The Alzheimer Society is a federation of 26 frontline community support service providers, operating in every community across Ontario. We supported over 95,000 clients last year, including both care partners and people living with dementia. We provide education and training to physicians and other health care professionals, as well as to the general public, and work to reduce the stigma that is far too often associated with dementia. As a health service provider, we offer system navigation, care partner respite, adult day programs, therapeutic recreation, and so much more at little or, for nearly all of our programs, no cost to families. With hundreds of staff and thousands of volunteers we seek to alleviate the personal and social consequences of Alzheimer's disease and other types of dementia, and to promote research into a cure. Learn more and find an Alzheimer Society near you:

<https://alzheimer.ca/on/en/about-us/find-your-local-alzheimer-society>

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Alzheimer Society of Ontario staff are available for media interviews in English and French.