

Alzheimer Society of Ontario Welcomes U.S. Regulatory Approval of Treatment for Alzheimer's Disease

Timely access to disease-modifying therapies crucial to slowing progression of symptoms

Toronto, ON, January 6, 2023—The Alzheimer Society of Ontario is welcoming a U.S. Food and Drug Administration decision released today to grant approval to Leqembi (lecanemab) under its Accelerated Approval pathway. This decision gives hope to the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who are at heightened risk of developing Alzheimer's disease that an effective pharmacological intervention could be available here in Ontario in years—not decades.

"Two years ago there were no approved treatments that could alter the course of Alzheimer's disease. Now, the United States has two," noted Cathy Barrick, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario. "Canadian regulators must act quickly to verify the safety and efficacy of lecanemab and as soon as it is safe to do so, provincial governments have a responsibility to fund approved treatments for all who will benefit from them. We can't afford to wait: the number of Ontarians living with dementia will triple by 2050, and we are already spending over \$10 billion every year as a province on this disease. A treatment can't come soon enough."

Research out of the University of Southern California released last year, sponsored by the Alzheimer Society, found that Ontario is not ready for the arrival of a disease-modifying therapy for Alzheimer's disease. If and when one is introduced in Ontario, wait times to secure a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease will skyrocket to seven and a half years—sadly longer than the expected lifespan of many who seek diagnosis. Lecanemab requires early detection and diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease to be effective, and current wait times to consult a dementia specialist of 12-18 months in Ontario will be a prohibitive barrier to making effective use of this treatment.

"Today's news out of the United States gives Ontarians hope: hope for their loved ones, hope for themselves, hope that we are finally on the right path to fight this terrible disease," continued Ms. Barrick. "But this hope is mixed with concern—concern that Ontario won't be ready. We have a very short runway now that the FDA has announced its decision: while not guaranteed, Canadian approval could be under two years away. Ontario needs more dementia specialists, better access to diagnostic tools, and a comprehensive plan to get a disease-modifying therapy to those who need it if and when one is approved for use in Canada."

There are over 277,000 Ontarians living with dementia today, and research from the Alzheimer Society of Canada predicts this will increase by 201% by 2050. By that same year there will be 444,400 unpaid care partners supporting people living with dementia in Ontario. One in three Ontarians over the age of 18 have a close family member living with dementia.

"In one way or another, this disease affects all of us," said Ms. Barrick. "We have no time to lose."

About the Alzheimer Society

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.

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