

Alzheimer Society of Ontario Applauds First Step Towards Approved Treatment for Alzheimer's Disease in Canada

Submission of Leqembi to Health Canada marks national first—and sets concrete deadline to prepare for introduction of Alzheimer's disease treatments

Ottawa, ON, May 17 2023—The Alzheimer Society of Ontario joins the over 282,000 Ontarians living with dementia in welcoming yesterday's submission of lecanemab (brand name Leqembi), a treatment for Alzheimer's disease already approved for use in the United States, to Health Canada for its consideration and possible approval for use in Canada. If approved, Leqembi would be Canada's first treatment for Alzheimer's disease—not just its symptoms.

"This news gives hope to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians at heightened risk of developing Alzheimer's disease that treatments will be available to help them," said Cathy Barrick, CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario. "Two years ago the world had no approved treatments for Alzheimer's disease. The United States now has two. We hope Canada will soon follow."

Granted accelerated approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in January 2023, submission to Health Canada is the first step in regulatory approval and eventual public access for Canadians. Leqembi has not yet been approved for use in Canada, however some Canadians with financial means are already receiving the potentially life-extending treatment by paying out-of-pocket in the United States.

"This treatment, or any treatment, won't be for everyone," continued Ms. Barrick. "But it is the first in what we hope will be an array of numerous treatments for Alzheimer's disease and, eventually, all forms of dementia. It is vital that we get the introduction of this first treatment right."

Research out of the University of Southern California released last year, sponsored by the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, found that Ontario is not ready for the now-foreseeable arrival of an approved treatment for Alzheimer's disease. With the introduction of such a treatment, wait times to get a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease will skyrocket to seven and a half years—longer than many who seek a diagnosis will live.

To be most effective Leqembi, along with two other promising treatments for Alzheimer's disease, must be administered early in disease progression. Currently Ontario neither detects nor diagnoses Alzheimer's disease early, and even when an individual begins to pursue a diagnosis the wait time is often 12-18 months. Earlier detection will require additional capacity in dementia specialists, biomarker testing, lumbar punctures, PET/MRI scanners, and a nimbleness among policymakers to welcome and incorporate new technologies in screening for and diagnosing Alzheimer's disease.

“Industry has done its part, developing effective treatments. People living with dementia have done their part, participating in clinical research. Regulators are doing their part, reviewing findings to get breakthrough treatments to Canadians who need them. It’s up to our elected officials and decision makers to get ready for what we now know is coming: Canada’s first-ever approved treatment for Alzheimer’s disease,” continued Ms. Barrick. “Ontarians are watching. We have no time to lose.”

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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.