

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday January 8, 2018

**Almost 50 per cent of Canadians would not want others to know if they had dementia,
says new survey
Alzheimer Society of B.C. campaign aims to end stigma**

Vancouver, B.C. (January 8, 2018) – The Alzheimer Society of B.C. announced today that while awareness about dementia has increased, stigma and negative attitudes about it continue to persist. The Society is releasing findings of a new survey to coincide with Alzheimer’s Awareness Month in January and to kick off its new social awareness campaign – **I live with dementia. Let me help you understand** – to spark conversations and encourage Canadians to see dementia differently.

The Leger-led online survey, which canvassed 1,500 Canadians between the ages of 18 and 65, also reveals that 46 per cent of respondents would feel ashamed or embarrassed if they had dementia, while 61 per cent of those surveyed said they would face discrimination of some kind. According to the survey, one in four Canadians believe that their friends and family would avoid them if they were diagnosed with dementia, and only five per cent of Canadians would learn more about dementia if a family member, friend or co-worker were diagnosed.

“Stigma significantly affects the well-being of people living with dementia,” says Maria Howard, Chief Executive Officer of the Alzheimer Society of B.C. “In order to build a dementia-friendly society, we need to move away from fear and denial of the disease, towards awareness and understanding.”

To tackle stigma, the Alzheimer Society is letting the experts – people affected by dementia – do the talking. One of these experts is Mario Gregorio, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and vascular dementia at the age of 58.

Mario and others invite Canadians to hear their inspiring stories and take a few pointers from them on how to be open and accepting towards people living with dementia.

Their stories are featured on a dedicated campaign website, where visitors will also find tips on how to be more dementia friendly, activities to test their knowledge, and other resources to take action against stigma and be better informed about a disease that has the potential to affect every single one of us.

To help stop stigma and read the full survey, visit ilivewithdementia.ca – and use the hashtag **#ilivewithdementia** to help spread the word.

Other highlights

- 56 per cent of Canadians are concerned about being affected by Alzheimer’s disease;
- Of greatest concern is the fear of being a burden to others, losing independence and the ability to recognize family and friends;
- Only 39 per cent would offer support for family or friends who were open about their diagnosis;

- Three in ten Canadians (30 per cent) admit to using dementia-related jokes.

Quick facts

- Today, over half a million Canadians have dementia (including Alzheimer’s disease);
- In less than 15 years, an estimated 937,000 Canadians will have dementia;
- Alzheimer Societies across Canada provide programs and support services for people with all forms of dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease, as well as their caregivers;
- The Alzheimer Society is a leading Canadian funder of dementia research and has to date invested over \$50 million in bio-medical and quality-of-life research through the Alzheimer Society Research Program.

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Interviews may be requested with Maria Howard (Chief Executive Officer), Laura Feldman (Support and Education Coordinator), Mario Gregorio (person living with dementia) or Rosario Fernandez (caregiver).

Media contact

Ben Rawluk

Coordinator, Marketing and Communications, Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Phone: 604-742-4912 | Cell: 604-812-4497

Email: brawluk@alzheimerbcc.org

Website: www.alzheimerbcc.org

About dementia

Dementia is a term that describes a general group of brain disorders. Symptoms include the loss of memory, impaired judgment, and changes in behaviour and personality. Dementia is progressive, degenerative and eventually terminal.

About the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

Families across British Columbia are affected by Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias. The Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s ultimate vision is a world without dementia; that vision begins with a world where people living with the disease are welcomed, acknowledged and included. Working in communities throughout the province, the Society supports, educates and advocates for people with dementia, as well as enabling research into the disease. As part of a national federation, the Society is a leading authority on the disease in Canada.