

For immediate release

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL
SAY DEMENTIA MUST BE A GLOBAL HEALTH PRIORITY**

ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF CANADA ASKS: WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CANADA?

TORONTO, April 11, 2012 – Landmark data released today by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) in their first-ever report on the global impact of dementia: *Dementia: A Public Health Priority* show that around the world a new case of dementia occurs every four seconds. That is the equivalent of 7.7 million new cases each year. In the words of global health expert Dr. Peter Piot, dementia is a 'ticking time bomb.'

Yet, only eight countries of the WHO member countries have dementia plans in place: Australia, Denmark, France, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom, with the United States currently developing a plan. Canada, however, has yet to get started on the development of a plan.

"The WHO report serves as a wake-up call for the Canadian Government to show leadership in planning for the impact of dementia on our health-care system and on the people living with this devastating disease," says Naguib Gouda, CEO at the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

With input from four working groups of experts and nearly two dozen international contributors, today's report is designed to compel world governments to replicate some of the solutions and approaches already adopted by countries to tackle the skyrocketing numbers of dementia affecting 35.6 million people worldwide.

"WHO recognizes the size and complexity of the dementia challenge and urges countries to view dementia as a critical public health priority," says Dr. Shekhar Saxena, one of the report's project leaders and Director of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at WHO.

In 2010 the Alzheimer Society of Canada sounded the alarm with its own seminal report, *Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia on Canadian Society*. It highlighted the rapidly increasing prevalence of dementia that will affect 1.1 million Canadians in less than 25 years, and the rising economic costs that are expected to increase tenfold to \$153 billion a year.

Rising Tide also recommended five evidence-based solutions to reduce the burden of dementia and improve the well-being of those affected. These include prioritizing research, raising awareness about prevention, promoting early diagnosis and management, strengthening workforce training and capacity and implementing responsive care and health service delivery, especially for caregivers. But so far, little action has been taken by the Government.

"We can no longer afford to sit idle," adds Gouda. "We're asking the Government to put Canada on the world map and make dementia a health priority. We can improve the outcomes for Canadians living with this debilitating disease if we build on the strengths of our current resources and implement a truly cross-government, cross-sector approach."

Dementia is a term that refers to a group of brain disorders whose symptoms include loss of memory, judgment and reasoning, and changes in mood and behaviour. Brain function is affected enough to interfere with a person's ability to function at work, in relationships or in everyday activities. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form, accounting for about two thirds of all dementias in Canada. It is a relentless and unforgiving condition that can last up to 20 years. The causes and cure are unknown.

Dementia is not a normal part of aging even though age remains the predominant risk factor. After 65, the risk for dementia doubles every five years. According to Statistics Canada, the number of seniors in Canada will jump to 9.8 million by 2036.

To join our campaign for a national dementia plan, visit **URL TBD**.

To download a copy of the WHO or *Rising Tide* report, visit www.alzheimer.ca

About the Alzheimer Society

The Alzheimer Society is the leading nationwide health charity for people living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Active in more than 150 communities across Canada, the Society offers **Help for Today** through our programs and services for people living with dementia and **Hope for Tomorrow...**[®] by funding research to find the cause and the cure. It is also a co-founding and leading member of ADI.

About the World Health Organization (WHO)

WHO is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system. It is responsible for providing leadership on global health matters, shaping the health research agenda, setting norms and standards, articulating evidence-based policy options, providing technical support to countries and monitoring and assessing health trends. For more information, visit <http://www.who.int/about/en/>.

About Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI)

ADI is the international federation of 78 Alzheimer associations that support people with dementia and their families in their respective countries. Founded in 1984, ADI serves as a network for Alzheimer associations around the world to share and exchange information, resources and skills. Its vision is a better quality of life for people with dementia and their families. ADI is based in London and is registered as a non-profit organization in the state of Illinois. For more information, visit www.alz.co.uk.

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