

Soci t  Alzheimer Society

CHATHAM - KENT

VOLUME II, ISSUE V

SPRING 2014

Understanding the New Alzheimer's Blood Test



Scientists have developed a blood test that could detect whether or not a person will develop dementia within three years. A research study was recently published in the journal, *Nature Medicine*. Researchers led by Howard Federoff, professor of neurology and executive dean of the Georgetown University School of Medicine, identified 10 molecules in blood which could be used to predict with at least 90% accuracy who will remain cognitively normal and who will develop mild cognitive impairment or Alzheimer's disease. The researchers collected blood samples and administered cognitive and memory tests to 525 people aged 70 and over. Then these tests were repeated annually.

Blood changes may signify Alzheimer's disease in its earliest stages, years before symptoms like memory loss appear. This research has the potential to help us understand the early stages of the disease and improve treatment. By the time the disease has progressed to produce evident memory loss and functional decline, the brain damage is already extensive. Developing treatments that will be more effective at earlier stages of the disease may be possible.

The Alzheimer Society of Canada agrees that news of this blood test is exciting but it is in the preliminary stages. This test is not

close to being available in the doctor's office. The researchers need to continue their research and their results will need to be replicated before it becomes publicly available.

If the blood test proves successful in diagnosing people at a pre-symptomatic stage, Alzheimer Societies across Canada will need to make sure that they are prepared to offer counselling, supports and services to all those with a positive test result and their families. Since Alzheimer's remains incurable, early diagnosis is vitally important for getting help and support through Alzheimer Societies, starting medication (which may not work for everyone) and making important decisions about future care including legal and financial needs.

If Alzheimer's disease can be predicted, would you want to take the test?

The Alzheimer Society of Canada warns that predicting those at risk also raises many ethical considerations. How will this information be used by life insurance companies, your own employer, the Ministry who issues your driver's license and so on? Until the fear and stigma still associated with the disease is reduced, there is a danger in being identified by this blood test. The person wanting to know whether he or she has the disease before symptoms appear needs to be aware of these ethical considerations and discuss them with their family and doctor. At this moment the public does not have access to this blood test. To take better care of older adults, it is important that everyone understand and recognize the warning signs and symptoms.

Here are some important facts to remember:

- Alzheimer's disease is the leading form of dementia, accounting for over two-thirds of all dementia in Canada today.
- Women account for 72% of all Canadians living with Alzheimer's disease.
- Age remains the biggest risk factor for dementia; the risk doubles every five years after age 65.
- Dementia can also strike individuals in their 40s and 50s.
- Changes in the brain that lead to dementia can begin up to 25 years before symptoms begin.
- The causes of Alzheimer's disease are not fully understood and there is still no cure. We need to invest more in Alzheimer's research.
- There is no known prevention, but a heart-healthy diet and staying physically, mentally and socially active can help reduce the risk.

Condensed from information provided by the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

A great time to make a charitable donation for first time donors.

A first time donor can make a gift of money of up to \$1000 to a registered charity and claim an extra 25% tax credit. If neither you or your spouse have claimed a charitable donation tax credit for any year after 2007, then you are eligible for this enhanced credit. This applies to gifts donated in one tax year between March 20, 2013 and the end of 2017.

Please consider taking advantage of this super credit and donate to the Alzheimer Society of Chatham-Kent.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

More than \$8600 raised in Walk for Memories

Tax Break for Donors

Great Gift Ideas

Volunteering keeps you young!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

New Blood Test 1

Walker Appreciation Breakfast 2

Self Care for the Caregiver 3

Volunteer Service Awards 4

2014
**WALK
FOR
MEMORIES**
Alzheimer Society



Walk for Memories Walker Appreciation Breakfast

The Walk for Memories on January 25 had to be canceled due to severe weather conditions so instead, we gathered together on March 1 for a Walker Appreciation Breakfast. We had breakfast and great entertainment and distributed the incentive and door prizes. It was wonderful to have a chance to thank our supporters who raised over \$8600 this year. This was an impressive \$2000 higher than the previous year! **A BIG thank you** to all of the participants and donors who supported them.



The Kemp family was the top team fundraiser! Thank you so much for bringing us \$1285.



Joyce Vidler, President of the Board and Rosemary McCleary, strong supporter and former board member, presented the incentive prizes.



Long time supporter and Honorary Board Member, Sue Thomas shown here with her daughter Vikki and twin grandsons Dean & Jarod who have been attending since they were toddlers.



Staffing Changes



We are pleased to announce the following staffing changes for the Wallaceburg Day Program. Deborah Gammage (at left) is now the Wallaceburg Day Program Coordinator and Cecile Fox (at right) is the Wallaceburg Day Program Assistant. Both have worked with the Alzheimer Society of Chatham-Kent for several years and bring a wealth of experience, enthusiasm and caring to their new roles.



Self care for the Caregiver

In 2011, Canadian family caregivers spent 444 million unpaid hours caring for a family member with dementia. That's nearly 230,000 full-time jobs.

Providing care for someone with dementia takes a tremendous toll on the physical and emotional health of the primary caregiver, yet many caregivers often do not recognize the warning signs, or deny its effects on their health. Many caregivers tend to set their own needs aside while caring for the person with dementia and hope that if they do not think about it, the stress might just go away. Although a common caregiver experience, caregiver stress can be very stressful and overwhelming. There are ways to reduce caregiver stress, but one must recognize it first...

Here are 10 warning signs of caregiver stress:

1. **Denial...**about the disease and its effect on the person with the disease. "Everyone is overreacting. I know Mom will get better."
2. **Anger...**at the person with dementia, yourself and others. "If he asks me that question once more I will scream!"
3. **Withdrawing socially...**you no longer want to stay in touch with friends or participate in activities you once enjoyed.

4. **Anxiety...**about facing another day and what the future holds. "I'm worried about what will happen when I can no longer provide care."

5. **Depression...**you feel sad and hopeless much of the time. "I don't care anymore. What is wrong with me?"

6. **Exhaustion...**you barely have the energy to complete your daily tasks. "I don't have the energy to do anything anymore."

7. **Sleeplessness...**you wake up in the middle of the night or have nightmares and stressful dreams. "I rarely sleep through the night, and don't feel refreshed in the morning."

8. **Emotional reactions...**you cry at minor upsets; you are often irritable. "I cried when there was no milk for my coffee this morning. Then I yelled at my son."

9. **Lack of concentration...**you have trouble focusing and you find it difficult to complete complex tasks. "I used to do the daily crossword. Now I am lucky if I can solve half of it."

10. **Health Problems...**you may lose or gain weight, get sick more often (colds, flu), or develop chronic health problems (backaches, high blood pressure). "Since the spring, I have had either a cold or the flu. I just can't seem to shake them."

If these symptoms occur on a regular basis, call your doctor or contact your local Alzheimer Society for help. The person under stress should go to the doctor for regular check-ups. Ask family members and friends for their help and support. Take advantage of community programs that provide respite and relief from caregiving, practical help with meals or housework and assistance with the care of the person with Alzheimer's disease.

The Alzheimer Society of Chatham-Kent provides several services that may be of assistance. Take advantage of free counselling, monthly support group meetings and participate in Learning Series courses. There is a Day Program located in both Chatham and Wallaceburg where the person with dementia participates in social, recreational and physical activities while the family caregiver gets a chance to take a break. There is also a support program of In-Home Respite Care where professional Personal Support Workers come to your home to assist in the Caregiving duties. Please call the Alzheimer Society office at 519-352-1043 to find out more about these programs. Remember to take care of yourself! Information from the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

Gift Ideas for People with Dementia



Who doesn't love receiving a gift? Tearing into a parcel is a source of fun and it can also be a ritual dating back to childhood. For the person with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, it can be therapeutic by bringing attention to whatever special occasion is being marked. A gift can remind her who, where and with whom she is. So don't let them be left out of the fun! With Mother's Day and Father's Day coming soon, here are some suggestions to help you choose the right gift.

In the early stages of the disease gifts that encourage your family member to use all of their remaining skills will help to maintain these abilities and slow the progression of the disease. Also, those that promote mental stimulation, remembrance and socializing and aides for independent living can be helpful. Here are a few ideas:

- Classic movies and TV shows
- Crossword puzzles and strategy games to keep the mind active
- A memory calendar full of family photos and important dates such as birthdays
- A membership to a health club to encourage physical activity
- A clock that displays the date and time
- Offer assistance with housekeeping and errands
- Plan an outing to a movie, play, sporting event or something that suits their interests

In the middle to late stages it becomes more difficult to perform simple tasks. Simple gifts that provide sensory stimulation are often the best and can help bring back pleasant memories, such as:

- A burned CD with favourite music
- Simple games or puzzles
- Pampering toiletries
- Framed photographs with the name of the people beneath
- Comfortable and easy to remove clothing
- Nature or other videos that feature visual and auditory stimulation
- Doll or stuffed animal
- A DVD with old family movies and pictures
- A touch quilt or blanket with different textures

Give only one or two presents to prevent over stimulation.

Information from the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

Société Alzheimer Society

CHATHAM - KENT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joyce Vidler, PRESIDENT

Dr. Will Saxena, VICE PRESIDENT

Anne Denomy, SECRETARY/TREASURER

DIRECTORS

Brenda Regnier **Andrea Sullivan**
Cindy Stokes **Pamela Herbert**

HONORARY MEMBERS

JoAn Dale **Sue Thomas**

STAFF

Brandon Ball,

Chatham Day Program Coordinator

Corinne Cazabon,

Social Worker

Esterina Cataldo,

Finance Coordinator

Louise Crow,

Chatham Day Program Assistant

Lina DeMattia,

ESC LHIN BSO Regional Education
Coordinator

Cecile Fox

Wallaceburg Day Program Assistant

Deborah Gammage,

Wallaceburg Day Program Coordinator

Jillian Heard,

BSO System Navigator

Marie Humphrey,

Admin/Finance/Volunteer Coordinator

Michelle Janisse,

Support Services Manager/Social Worker

Aimee Meriano,

Respite Supervisor/Events Coordinator

Jana Murphy,

Day Programs Manager

Mary Ellen Parker,

CEO

Tara Seney,

Public Education Manager/First Link®

Christina Stergiou,

ESC LHIN BSO Regional Coordinator

Nikki Stergiou

Policy Research Assistant

Robert VanDevelde,

Tammy Walzack

Day Program Support Staff

IN-HOME RESPITE CARE WORKERS

Kim Chenier

Jolanda Chevalier

Cecile Fox

Lisa Kochnowich

Tammy Murphy-

Lodewegen

Pat Spears

Felicia Trigo

Kim Verfaillie

Denise Walker-

Veniot

Brenda Wrobel

Volunteers - the heart of our community



Joyce Vidler & her husband Jeff both received awards.

On April 9, 2014 at the Capitol Theatre in Chatham, the 2014 Volunteer Service Awards were presented to outstanding Chatham-Kent Volunteers. The awards were sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Luc Vincent and Colleen Moran with the Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat presented each volunteer with a lapel pin and certificate in recognition of their commitment and dedication as a volunteer. This year 166 volunteers were nominated for these awards.

The following volunteers of the Alzheimer Society of Chatham-Kent were presented certificates:

20 years:

JoAn Dale (Past President of the Board)

15 years:

Sue Thomas (Board Member)

10 years:

Brenda Regnier (Board Member)

5 years:

Phil Phillips (Chatham Day Program Volunteer)

Marg Riehl (Chatham Day Program Volunteer)

Joyce Vidler (Current President of the Board)

Do your brain a favour- VOLUNTEER!

Volunteering not only engages your mind and body, but it can actually help you age well and reduce the risk of age-related diseases such as dementia.

Meeting new people and engaging in new activities can boost endorphins which are those "feel-good" brain cells that keep your heart pumping, your mind sharp, and your immune system working. They also help lower stress. Staying engaged and curious about your world helps keep you young at heart and feeling vibrant.



Marg Riehl



JoAn Dale & Joyce Vidler

MISSION STATEMENT

To improve the quality of life of people affected by Alzheimer's disease or related dementias through superior programs and research.

Supported by:



Ontario

Erie St. Clair Local Health
Integration Network



36 Memory Lane
Chatham, ON N7L 5M8

Phone: 519.352.1043

Fax: 519.352.3680

E-mail: info@alzheimerchathamkent.ca

www.alzheimer.ca/chathamkent