

## 2014 ALZHEIMER AWARENESS MONTH EARLY DIAGNOSIS PROVIDES EARLY ACCESS TO SUPPORT

**Regina, SK, January 7, 2014** – What if you knew that you, a family member or friend might be living with dementia, but you didn't know for sure? Where would you turn for help? Would you know what questions to ask your doctor?

The reality is that only 20-50% of people with dementia actually receive a diagnosis. Stopping people from getting answers are things like the stigma associated with dementia, the belief that memory problems are just a normal part of aging, or that nothing can be done to help people who are diagnosed, their family and caregivers.

With no diagnosis, individuals and their families live with the disease not fully understanding the changes happening or knowing where they can find support.

This Alzheimer Awareness Month, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is encouraging you to learn more about the warning signs and the steps to getting a diagnosis as early as possible. A diagnosis of a dementia such as Alzheimer's disease can be devastating, but it can also bring relief and it serves as a gateway to accessing services.

"Getting that diagnosis helps you and your family understand the source and reason for the symptoms being experienced," says Dr. Jenny Basran, Saskatchewan's only Royal College Certified Geriatrician. Dr. Basran adds, "A diagnosis can also link you to organizations like the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan who can provide you with information, education and support during every stage of this disease."

If you're unsure about where to begin when getting a diagnosis, the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan will be with you every step along the way.

They can:

- Help you identify if the symptoms you're experiencing could be dementia
- Prepare you for your doctor's visit
- Provide individual and group support for the person with dementia, their caregiver and family
- Connect you to other community agencies and services to help you live better with dementia

Another benefit to early diagnosis is early access to the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan's services. For Victoria and Stan Dillen, an early diagnosis and connection to the Alzheimer Society may have meant four years they wouldn't have lived on their own with this disease. "Not only has the Alzheimer Society given Stan and I the information, practical tools, and tools to help us in our journey, but they have provided us with a community of people who are in similar situations," says Victoria, who attends the Society's monthly caregiver support group. Her husband Stan attends an early memory loss support group and they both are very active volunteers at the Society. Victoria adds, "These opportunities make life for both Stan and I a bit easier. We know we have the support to help us manage each day."

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is taking the steps to ensure that people throughout the province have access to their services. With Resource Centres in Regina, Saskatoon, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Swift Current and Weyburn, more people can access their services in their local community. Anywhere in Saskatchewan, the Alzheimer Society can provide support through their toll-free Dementia Helpline and educational opportunities are available through Telehealth.

# Alzheimer Society

S A S K A T C H E W A N

“We want to make sure that people in Saskatchewan are provided with the support and tools to live better with dementia, wherever they live and wherever they are in the disease process, diagnosed or undiagnosed,” explains Joanne Bracken, Chief Executive Officer at the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan.

“No one expects dementia to be part of their life plan, but a diagnosis can help families and individuals take control of their lives, plan for the future, and make the best of a tough situation,” Bracken adds.

This Alzheimer Awareness Month, take the first steps towards a diagnosis:

- Know the 10 Warning Signs and your risk factors
- Contact the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider and encourage them to refer you to the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan

Visit [www.alzheimer.ca/sk](http://www.alzheimer.ca/sk) or call the Dementia Helpline (1-800-263-3367) today.

## **About the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan**

The Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan is the province's leading dementia care and research charity. We provide support and education to people with dementia as well as their family and caregivers through peer group, telephone and individual support. We fund Saskatchewan-based and Canada-wide research focused on discovering a cause, a cure and improving the quality of life for those currently living with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.

-30-

### **Media contact**

Chelsea Jacobs  
Communications & Marketing Coordinator  
Office: 306-949-4141  
Mobile: 306-531-8914  
[cjacobs@alzheimer.sk.ca](mailto:cjacobs@alzheimer.sk.ca)  
[www.alzheimer.ca/sk](http://www.alzheimer.ca/sk)