

Ottawa Journal: January is Alzheimer Awareness Month

Alzheimer's disease is a devastating degenerative brain disorder.

The intellectual and physical impacts on those effected with it are immense.

While the disease has been recognized and studied for many years, there is still a great deal to learn about it to hopefully one day find a cure.

January is Alzheimer Awareness Month, which presents us with an opportunity to increase our awareness and to support efforts in finding a cure.

According to the Alzheimer Society of Canada's website, 74 per cent of Canadians know someone with dementia and, with an aging population, more are expected to be diagnosed with it. Early diagnosis, however, is very important as it can have a significant impact not only on the quality of life for the person with the disease, but also extend their life.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia. Dementia is a broad term used to describe disorders that effect the brain. The symptoms can vary from memory loss to problems with thinking and problem-solving or language, which have a considerable impact on an individual's ability to perform daily activities.

It's also a progressive disease and unfortunately, as the brain cells continue to deteriorate and die, the symptoms become more pronounced.

The Alzheimer Society of Canada has developed a list of 10 symptoms to watch for, including: memory loss, which impacts day-to-day abilities; difficulty performing familiar tasks; problems with language; disorientation in time and space; impaired judgment; problems with abstract thinking; misplacing things; changes in mood and behavior; changes in personality; and loss of initiative.

It is recommended that if you have concerns about any of these symptoms that you speak with your family physician.

Sadly, there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Furthermore, there aren't any treatments to stop its progression. There are some medications and non-pharmacological treatments available, however, that may help alleviate some of the symptoms.

Fortunately, organizations such as the Alzheimer Society of Canada and local branches of the Society, such as the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County, provide excellent programs, services, and support to Alzheimer patients.

The main office is located at 25 Centennial Road in Orangeville with a satellite site located in the Mel Lloyd Centre in Shelburne (167 Centre Street, Entrance C, Second Floor).

Alzheimer Awareness Month is an excellent time to say thank you to organizations like the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County for the outstanding work they perform to support Alzheimer's patients and their families and for us to support them in return.

Some ways to show that support include: volunteering, fundraising, advocating, and donating.

For more information on the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County and to learn more about the disease, as well as how to become involved, please visit www.alzheimerdufferin.org.

Together, we can work towards finding a cure for this terrible disease.

By David Tilston, MP