

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

1-in-3 Ontarians will develop stroke, dementia

During Stroke Month, let's make the connection between heart and brain

TORONTO – JUNE 2, 2014 – Approximately one-in-three Ontarians will develop stroke, dementia or both, and the incidence for each increases the risk of the other.

That was the message as three Ontario health organizations came together during Stroke Month to raise awareness for stroke and dementia. The Ontario Stroke Network, the Alzheimer's Society of Ontario and the Heart and Stroke Foundation have joined forces to highlight the fact that stroke, dementia and heart disease share common risk factors, each increasing the odds of the other while the same healthy lifestyle can mitigate the risks.

"Vascular cognitive impairment affects up to 60 per cent of stroke survivors and is associated with poorer recovery and decreased ability to function," said Ontario Stroke Network Executive Director Christina O'Callaghan. "Improving the care system by identifying opportunities for collaboration toward healthier lifestyles in general and a treatment approach that recognizes and addresses possible co-morbidities affecting the primary diagnosis in particular, will benefit all Ontarians."

Dr. Sandra Black, Director of the Brain Sciences Research Program at Sunnybrook Research Institute in Toronto, said the public, physicians, patients and their care partners need knowledge and strategies to address disease prevention early diagnoses and disease management.

"Stroke is the second commonest cause of dementia, and often is combined with Alzheimer's disease," she said. "Vigorous management of vascular risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, exercise and a heart healthy diet, even in midlife, is crucial for dementia as well as stroke prevention.

"Given our aging population, it is important for our healthcare system and for each individual to know their vascular risk profile and to start a healthy lifestyle at any age to improve brain reserve, as we search for new ways to facilitate recovery and new therapies to prevent and treat dementia."

David Harvey, Chief Public Policy and Program Initiatives Officer at the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, said that risk factors for stroke, dementia and heart disease can be mitigated by the same healthy lifestyle changes, i.e. exercising, eating right, challenging the brain and staying social.

"In older adults without Alzheimer's disease, those who were very physically active were 40% less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those who were inactive," he said. "Healthy eating can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke and by reducing the risks of these diseases, the risk of dementia is also decreased.



Did you know ...?

- Vascular dementia is the second-most common form of dementia after Alzheimer Disease, contributing to around 20 per cent of cases.
- Stroke is the leading cause of adult disability in Canada - it is estimated that approx. 315,000 Canadians are living with the effects of stroke.
- More than 200,000 Ontarians are currently living with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.
- This year, Ontarians caring for family members and friends with dementia will contribute an estimated 112 million unpaid caregiving hours. This number is expected to surpass 140 million hours by 2020.
- While the risk for dementia does increase with age, an estimated two to 10 per cent of all cases actually start before the age of 65.
- By the year 2031, all baby boomers will be 65 or over, and the population of older adults 80+ will have almost doubled that of 2013.

ABOUT ONTARIO STROKE NETWORK

The Ontario Stroke Network provides provincial leadership and planning for the continuum of stroke care in Ontario—from health promotion and stroke prevention to acute care, recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration.

ABOUT ALZHEIMER SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Since 1983, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario has been dedicated to improving the quality of life for Ontarians living with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and advancing the search for the cause and cure.

ABOUT HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION

The Heart and Stroke Foundation is one of Canada's largest and most effective health charities. Over the past 60 years, we have invested more than \$1.35 billion in heart and stroke research, making us the largest contributor in Canada after the federal government.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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