

Connections

Linking a community of dementia support



Preparing for change and finding support

As we move into fall, days become cooler, the sun rises later and nightfall arrives earlier. This time of year, we often think about change.

Change can be challenging for people on the dementia journey, but the more you know about the disease and the changes that can come, the better prepared you can be. Knowledge helps you develop strategies for facing difficult and unpredictable situations, whether you're living with dementia yourself or caring for someone who is.

Throughout the fall, we encourage you to reach out to us for support and resources, available both online and in-person.

The First Link® Dementia Helpline: The confidential Helpline gives people the support they need, when they need it. Available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 1-800-936-6033. Support is also available in Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Learn more: alzbc.org/dhl.

Support groups: There are others to share the journey with you. Learn, laugh and help others through mutual understanding. If you are interested in participating, call the First Link® Dementia Helpline for more information.

Webinars: Find recordings of recently weekly webinars on frequently asked questions and concerns, including topics on caregiving, focus on behaviour, personal planning and many more at alzbc.org/ondemand.

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Meeting the needs of people affected by dementia

Welcome to the fall issue of *Connections*, the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s publication for people affected by or concerned about dementia.

This October marks one year since introducing our new hybrid model of programming across British Columbia. We're focused on changing people's experiences of the disease and it is our commitment to continue seeking ways to improve and expand our services. We are here for you.

As we move into the fall and prepare for cooler and shorter days, the changing of the season may also mean changes to routines for people living with dementia and caregivers. This transition comes with its own unique set of challenges, and we want to ensure people affected by dementia are supported to manage those challenges. This issue of *Connections* features the Society's support groups and we hear from caregivers who share their support group experiences and how they cope during difficult times.

We also share the latest report released by the Alzheimer Society of Canada, detailing a significant update on dementia numbers across Canada, including here in B.C. The report, which outlines dementia's current impact and models its future impact, will be an important tool for us in creating awareness of dementia and advocating for change.

Finally, this issue shares information about volunteer opportunities available at the Society and how people living with dementia who also have a cancer diagnosis, or their caregivers, can participate in a research study focused on their experiences.



Jen Lyle
Chief Executive Officer
Alzheimer Society of B.C.



First Link[®]
DEMENTIA HELPLINE

Questions about dementia or memory loss?

English: 1-800-936-6033
Cantonese or Mandarin: 1-833-674-5007
Punjabi: 1-833-674-5003

English: Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Cantonese or Mandarin and Punjabi: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Finding connections through caregiver support groups



Hannelore Sternbiel, caregiver

Hannelore Sternbiel lives in Kelowna, where she cares for her husband, who is living with dementia. Hannelore has been attending the Society's caregiver support groups since 2018.

What did you think of support groups before joining?

I didn't know anything. I worked in the hospital for years and didn't know much about dementia at all.

What did you think of the support group on your first day attending?

I felt really good, I was able to learn a lot because other participants were sharing stories about what they were doing in the later stages. I was really interested.

Is there anything you look forward to when you're attending the support group?

I looked forward to getting together with people who have the same problems that I have. I really didn't know much about dementia early on. It came slowly. It was hard for family members and friends to understand if they hadn't lived with the person who is living with dementia.

Many people believe support groups are too emotional. Do you feel that there have been lighter days and laughter shared between your peers?

Yes, that's what I liked. We did a lot of laughing. I thought you would just be sitting there and sharing emotions, but I was surprised we can laugh in spite

what we're all going through. It's okay to laugh if the person you care for does something funny. Why not? We need laughter in that.

How important is it to build connection with others affected by dementia?

It's very important. If I was alone, I wouldn't know how to cope. It's important to connect with people who are in the same boat and talk about what's going on with your life. We learn from each other.

What's the most valuable takeaway you have learned in a support group?

Support groups are very important for caregivers. Caregiving is a big job. Everyday is different and you don't know how your partner will be. Sometimes they're happy and sometimes they're angry. Support groups help you approach things with a different attitude.

What would you tell caregivers about support groups?

I would really encourage people to come to the groups. Come and listen. See if it helps you and maybe you can learn something.

Learn more

To find out more about support groups for caregivers and people in the early stages of dementia, visit alzbc.org/support-groups.

Support groups offer opportunity to connect with others

The Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s caregiver support groups are based on the information and mutual aid model, following the philosophy that people in similar situations are in a unique position to give and receive support from others along the dementia journey.

Caring for a family member or friend living with dementia can be isolating for many, as those in your social network may not be able to fully understand or relate to the caregiver experience. A support group provides that connection to others who truly “get it.” We see people connect at a deep level and share things that they might not have been able to say outside of the group. Sometimes tears are shared but often there is laughter and moments of joy shared too. The friendships people form in support groups frequently transcend the group and become a vital lifeline.

No one should walk this journey alone; a support group can provide that sense of belonging and genuine understanding many caregivers are missing in their day to day lives. Participants like Hannelore (interviewed on Page 3) shared what it was like joining the support groups. Here's what they had to say:

“It was safe, it wasn't scary and, delightfully, other people shared a couple of laughs. We all got it and we thought it was nice that they shared it with us. It's not something you would expect.”

– Rose, family caregiver support group

“I encourage LGBTQ2S+ people caring for their partners to register for support groups. If they feel uncomfortable, join by phone. It's been such a lifeline, it's real support for them.”

– Ian, LGBTQ2S+ support group

“I look forward to chatting with other caregivers. I especially look forward to hearing their stories. I get to learn from what they've experienced and share with them what I'm going through.”

– Maureen, family caregiver support group



New report highlights impact of dementia

The Alzheimer Society of Canada has just launched the first in a series of three reports known as the Landmark Study, written by Dr. Joshua Armstrong. These reports represent the first significant update on Canada's dementia landscape – along with projections on the future – since the Rising Tide report was released in 2010.

The first report, “Navigating the path forward for dementia in Canada,” includes forecasts on the number of people across the country expected to be living with dementia over the next three decades. This forecast includes national breakdowns based on gender and type of dementia. It also looks at the impact on the care partners supporting someone living with the disease, most often their family and friends.

The report offers important insights into the impact of dementia here in B.C. An estimated 85,800 people are living with the disease across the province, while another 50,400 people act as care partners, providing an estimated 67.9 million hours of unpaid time each

year to provide them with support. By 2050, an estimated 247,300 people will be living with dementia in B.C. The impact of this sizable jump cannot be understated, particularly the socioeconomic impact as more people – notably women, given the often gendered nature of caregiving – must step away from their careers to support friends and family living with dementia.

The report outlines steps governments – as well as individuals – can take to reduce the risk of developing dementia. Subsequent volumes of the Landmark Study will look at the relationship between ethnocultural background and dementia, as well as examining the economic impact of the disease in greater detail.

Learn more

To read the first volume of the Landmark Study, visit alzheimer.ca/landmark-study.



**NAVIGATING THE PATH
FORWARD FOR
DEMENTIA IN CANADA**

Join us for the 3rd annual Telethon for Alzheimer's

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. will once again be partnering with Fairchild Television to co-produce the *Telethon for Alzheimer's* on Saturday, November 5, to be broadcast nationwide on Fairchild Television.

The *Telethon for Alzheimer's* is an 80-minute Cantonese-language variety program featuring interviews with B.C. researchers and health-care providers, courageous stories of community members affected by dementia, as well as helpful tips and resources for maintaining quality of life after a diagnosis.

Since 2016, the Society's Chinese Advisory Committee has been organizing fundraising events like the *Telethon*. This year, the funds raised at the *Telethon* will help the Society provide programs, education and support services to the Chinese community, as well as supporting research into the causes of dementia and possible treatments.

The *Telethon* will also raise critical awareness about the disease and how individuals can help create an inclusive and supportive community that is dementia friendly, where people affected by the disease can have the confidence to live well. Although there is no cure, we provide support and education to ensure no one has to face the disease alone.

Tune in to the *Telethon for Alzheimer's* on Saturday, November 5, at 8 p.m. on Fairchild Television. Learn more at alzbc.org/telethon2022.

For information and support in Cantonese or Mandarin, contact the First Link® Chinese Dementia Helpline at 1-833-674-5007, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Support people on the dementia journey with a securities gift

When it comes to donating to the Alzheimer Society of B.C., many people look to not only supporting a cause they care deeply about, but to ensuring that they are considering the tax benefits as well. One of the ways donors can support the Alzheimer Society of B.C. is to give a gift of securities, like publicly traded stocks, bonds or mutual funds.

Donors do not have to pay any capital gains tax on donations of publicly-traded securities, and will receive a charitable tax receipt for their donation. Donations can be made during your lifetime or by leaving a securities gift in your will. It's a very tax-efficient way to support people affected by dementia.

We always recommend that anyone who is interested in supporting the Alzheimer Society of B.C. with this type of gift speak to their financial advisor to see how

this can best work for you. To learn more about how to make a securities gift, contact Bryan Irving at 604-742-4906 or by email at birving@alzheimerbc.org.



Research opportunity for people living with both cancer and dementia

Dr. Shelley Canning, Nursing professor and Director for the Centre for Education and Research on Ageing (CERA) at the University of the Fraser Valley, is working with clinicians at BC Cancer to conduct a research study to better understand the experiences of people living with dementia who also have a cancer diagnosis. By better understanding the experiences and challenges patients are facing, researchers hope to implement a more dementia-friendly approach at BC Cancer.

Dr. Canning and her research team are looking to have the help of someone living with both

diagnoses or their caregiver to guide the study as a member of their team. If you are interested in learning more, contact Dr. Canning at shelley.canning@ufv.ca or call 604-855-9813.



Dr. Shelley Canning

Volunteering strengthens communities, brings people together and promotes personal growth

The Society is seeking new volunteers for a variety of roles that offer social engagement, professional development and an opportunity to support a community appreciative of your help. Some of the available volunteer roles include:

In-person and virtual support group facilitator

Learn more: alzbc.org/SG-facilitator

IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's: Event planning committees

Learn more: alzbc.org/event-volunteer

Administrative support team: Office assistant

Learn more: alzbc.org/office-volunteer

To apply for any of these roles or submit a general interest application, visit alzbc.org/volunteer.



About Connections

Connections is a quarterly print and digital publication produced by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Articles cannot be reproduced without written permission.

Contact us to contribute content or to subscribe to receive *Connections* regularly.

- Online at alzbc.org/connections-newsletter
- Email newsletter@alzheimersbc.org
- Call 604-681-6530; 1-800-667-3742 (toll-free)
- Mail to the Alzheimer Society of B.C.
300-828 West 8th Avenue,
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

Help us reduce costs by subscribing to *Connections* by email.

Are you a person living with dementia?

We also publish *Insight*, a publication for people living with dementia or cognitive impairment. For more information, visit alzbc.org/insight-newsletter.



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