



MEDIA RELEASE

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September 21 is World Alzheimer’s Day

An estimated 500,000 Canadians are currently living with Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia. The majority are aged 65 or older and nearly three-quarters of them are female, according to the Alzheimer’s Society of Canada. With Canadian seniors expected to account for one-quarter of the population in three decades, and 1 in 11 of them having a form of dementia, 50 per cent of Canadian families are expected to be coping with a family member with dementia.

Speech-language pathologists (S-LPs), who are represented by the national professional association the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), have an important role to play in the diagnosis and treatment of dementias.

“Dementia is a syndrome; a collection of different diseases that affect cognitive skills including multiple memory and attention systems and processes, judgment, reasoning and other intellectual abilities,” says S-LP J.B. Orange, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of the School of Communication Sciences & Disorders at the University of Western Ontario. “All types of dementia, such as Alzheimer’s disease, affect language and communication. The earliest and most common language problems ... include word finding problems and difficulty using and understanding complex forms of language and idiomatic terms.”

“[Speech-language pathologists] are instrumental in the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the language and cognitive-communication skills of persons with dementia and of their caregivers,” adds Dr. Orange. S-LPs identify and develop strategies for effective communication for persons with dementia. “S-LPs develop education and training programs for the caregivers of individuals with dementia, supporting caregiver’s knowledge of the language and communication changes that accompany the emergence and progression of the dementia.”

According to the Alzheimer’s Society of Canada, 36 per cent of Canadians know someone with Alzheimer’s disease. If someone you know has communication problems due to dementia, CASLPA suggests consulting a speech-language pathologist. CASLPA represents the professional needs of more than 5,500 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel. For more information about the role speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel play in the treatment of communication disorders or to find a S-LP or audiologist in your area, visit CASLPA’s website at www.speechandhearing.ca. Additional information about Alzheimer’s and related dementias can be found at on Alzheimer Society of Canada’s website, www.alzheimers.ca.

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