



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

# **June is Brain Injury Awareness Month in Canada**

Brain injuries are the number one killer and disabler of people under the age of 44 in Canada. It is estimated that approximately 1.3 million Canadians are living with an acquired brain injury (ABI), according to the Brain Injury Association of Canada.

Speech-language pathologists (S-LPs), audiologists and supportive personnel, who are represented by the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), have an important role to play in this area. Research indicates that 80 to 100 percent of individuals with a brain injury will have some form of communication disorder. Treatment by these professionals is essential, as they “work to maximize communication and swallowing and, in turn, participation in daily life and activities,” says CASLPA president and Manitoba speech-language pathologist Gillian Barnes.

“Speech-language pathologists are an integral part of the interdisciplinary team who treat the individual with an ABI. The cognitive communication deficits subsequent to an ABI can have a devastating impact on an individual’s ability to participate in daily activities and subsequently affect their quality of life. There may be implications on the individual’s ability to participate in daily communication and performing vocational activities,” adds Barnes.

CASLPA represents the professional needs of more than 5,500 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel. CASLPA has provided leadership in developing recommended wait times for various diagnostic areas through the Pan-Canadian Alliance Wait Times Project. The group recommends that after receiving a S-LP referral due to a traumatic brain injury, the patient should have their first appointment within 24-72 hours if in an acute care facility, 48-72 hours if in an inpatient rehabilitation facility and less than 1 month if an outpatient in the community.

Approaches to treatment and rehabilitation of brain injuries are diverse, as each individual with a brain injury will experience different challenges in speaking, swallowing, reading, listening or hearing. “Considerations must be given to the severity and type of brain injury, the individual’s pre-injury status and family and community supports that are available,” adds Barnes. “Approaches to treatment focus on the communication impairment secondary to the cognitive deficits as well as evaluating and treating any swallowing difficulties post injury.”

Simple recommendations to prevent brain injuries include wearing a helmet during sporting activities, preventing falls, avoiding alcohol and substance abuse, maintaining a healthy lifestyle and wearing your seatbelt. For more information about the role speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel play in the treatment of communication disorders or to find a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in your area, visit CASLPA’s website at [www.speechandhearing.ca](http://www.speechandhearing.ca). Additional information about Brain Injury Awareness Month, the Brain Injury Association of Canada and a listing of related events can be found on their website at [www.biac-aclc.ca](http://www.biac-aclc.ca).

-30-

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