

MEDIA RELEASE

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CASLPA Members Support Thousands of Canadians Living with Alzheimer's and Other Dementias

September 21 is World Alzheimer's Day

Approximately 500,000 Canadians live with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia (ADRD), according to the Alzheimer's Society of Canada. Based on current incident and prevalence rates, the number of people in Canada living with ADRD will more than double to 1.1 million within 25 years. This figure will amount to approximately 2.5 per cent of Canada's entire population.

Speech-language pathologists (S-LP) and audiologists, represented by the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), hold pivotal roles in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of individuals with ADRD. The expertise of these professionals to perform vital assessments will be increasingly important as the number of Canadians with ADRD grows.

"Dementia is a syndrome; a collection of different diseases that affect cognitive skills including multiple memory and attention systems, processes, judgment, reasoning and other intellectual abilities," says S-LP and CASLPA member J.B. Orange, Associate Professor and Director of the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders at University of Western Ontario. "Language and communication are affected in all types of dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease. The earliest emerging and most common language problems in ADRD include word finding problems, and difficulty using and understanding complex forms of language such as figurative and idiomatic terms."

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are not limited to the elderly and can affect people as young as 40 years old. Early indicators of dementia, regardless of age of onset, include memory loss, changes in personality, difficulty performing familiar but complex tasks of daily living (e.g., managing finances) and problems with language and communication.

"S-LPs and audiologists work collaboratively with other medical and health care professionals to improve early identification, optimize diagnosis and enhance treatment of language, communication and cognitive impairments at all clinical stages of ADRD" adds Orange.

If you or someone you know has a communication problem or limitation, CASLPA recommends contacting a speech-language pathologist or audiologist. For more information about the role these professionals play in the management of communication disorders or to find a S-LP or audiologist in your area, visit CASLPA's website at www.speechandhearing.ca.

-30-

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