



## **Bondar talks about memory**

Roberta Bondar may have been Canada's first woman to launch into space more than a decade ago, but she's now on a whole new mission.

Bondar, a neurologist, photographer, author and official spokesperson for the national initiative Mission for Memories, lands in Vancouver today for a free public forum about Alzheimer's disease.

Bondar and the Mission for Memories series is part of an on-going effort to increase awareness and promote early diagnosis of the progressive neurological disease that is typically marked by loss of memory, confusion, personality changes and impaired language skills.

"People don't want the diagnosis because they don't want to deal with it," Bondar told *24 hours*.

"However, there are treatments now out there that don't cure Alzheimer's disease, but they can slow down the progression of the disease and allow people to be productive members of the society for longer, and retain dignity as long as we can."

While Alzheimer's disease is not part of the natural aging process, the risk of developing Alzheimer's increases after the age of 65, said Bondar. And since just one per cent of Alzheimer's cases are brought on by genetics, it's crucial to be proactive about seeing a doctor as soon as you notice changes in yourself or an aging family member.

The free Mission for Memories public forum with Bondar and local medical experts happens tonight (World Alzheimer's Day) at the Italian Cultural Centre (3075 Slocan St.) from 7 – 9 pm. Call 604-878-5556 for more information.

**Robyn Stubbs**  
**24 hours (Vancouver)**