



RobertaBONDAR

PRESS RELEASE - Roberta Bondar
Mission for Memories
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Alzheimer's Disease Mission for Memories: Dr. Roberta Bondar Launches National Awareness Initiative on Alzheimer's Disease

Today Dr. Roberta Bondar, Canada's first woman in space and the world's first astronaut-neurologist, announced the launch of a national awareness initiative on Alzheimer's disease, entitled Alzheimer's Disease Mission for Memories: Taking action today for a better tomorrow.

The year 2006 marks the 100th anniversary of the identification of Alzheimer's disease by Dr. Alois Alzheimer. Mission for Memories celebrates this important milestone, as well as the important treatment advances made to date, in order to give hope to patients and caregivers for discoveries yet to come.

As a neurologist, Dr. Bondar understands the significance of educating Canadians about Alzheimer's disease, as well as increasing awareness of the importance of early diagnosis and treatment. "Marking the 100th year since Dr. Alois Alzheimer first described the disease that bears his name, public awareness of its signs, symptoms, progression and available family supports will complement and enhance the great strides made by medicine in diagnosing and treating this form of dementia," stated Dr. Bondar, spokesperson, Mission for Memories.

Early diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease can help delay the symptomatic progression of the disease and allow both patients and caregivers to continue to share memories and enjoy life. Although there are interventions available that can help slow progression of symptoms, continuing research is needed into causes and treatments for Alzheimer's disease.

"While some memory loss can be common, Alzheimer's disease causes more severe memory and cognitive difficulties that begin to interfere with daily functioning and should prompt people to take action for themselves or someone they care for," said Dr. Sandra Black, Head of Neurology, Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre. "Regardless of the stage of the disease there is something that you can do and research is leading to new options. Awareness initiatives such as Mission for Memories help educate people and break down the barriers to diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease."

This attitude was confirmed through extensive opinion research completed in late 2005 by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of Pfizer Canada. Nearly one out of every three Canadians identified at high risk for Alzheimer's disease¹ had not consulted a physician at the time of the survey. In 69% of the cases, the most common reason for not consulting a physician was the belief that memory loss was normal.

The main objective of this awareness initiative is to provide the opportunity for Canadians to learn more about Alzheimer's disease and the importance of early diagnosis. The series of interactive public forums will feature Dr. Bondar and leading Canadian Alzheimer's disease specialists and researchers. The forums will take place in four major Canadian cities throughout 2006 (Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, and Vancouver) and will be open to the public.

The first public forum will take place in Toronto on March 9th, as part of the Speaker Series at Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre. Mission for Memories is made possible through a sponsorship grant from Pfizer Canada Inc.

About Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's is a progressive degenerative disease for which there is no preventive medicine or cure. It is characterized by a decline in mental abilities and changes in personality and behaviour. Usually there is a loss of functioning that eventually impedes the ability to carry out everyday activities. Alzheimer's disease is under-diagnosed and under-treated in Canada and worldwide. An estimated 420,000 Canadians over 65 years have Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia.

Symptoms of Alzheimer's include:

- Progressive loss of memory
- Difficulty with concentration
- Decrease in problem-solving skills and judgment
- Confusion, delusions
- Altered perception; impaired recognition
- Impaired skilled motor function, disorientation
- Impaired language skills
- Personality changes

About Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre

Sunnybrook and Women's College Health Sciences Centre is transforming health care through the dedication of its more than 10,000 staff members and volunteers.

Specializing in women's health programs, caring for Canada's war veterans, conducting leading-edge research and teaching the latest advances in healthcare through our affiliation with the University of Toronto, distinguishes Sunnybrook & Women's as one of the country's premier academic health sciences centres.

Sunnybrook & Women's improves the lives of hundreds of thousands of people each year by caring for newborns, adults and the elderly, treating and preventing cancer, heart and circulation diseases, disorders of the brain, mind and nervous system, orthopaedic and arthritic conditions, and traumatic injuries.

About Pfizer Canada Inc.

Pfizer Canada Inc. is the Canadian operation of Pfizer Inc., the world's leading pharmaceutical company. Pfizer discovers, develops, manufactures and markets leading prescription medicines for both humans and animals, as well as many of the world's best-known over-the-counter healthcare products. Pfizer Canada employs more than 2,000 people across the country. Canadian headquarters of Pfizer Global Pharmaceuticals Group is in Kirkland, Quebec.

REFERENCE:

- 1) Mundt, JC et al., Lay Person-Based Screening for Early Detection of Alzheimer's Disease: Development and Validation of an Instrument, *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 200, Vol. 55B, No. 3, p 163-170.