

Ottawa Journal by David Tilson MP ? Sept. 21 is World Alzheimer's Day

Most of us know someone who's living with or has succumbed to Alzheimer's disease.

It is an irreversible disease that isn't a normal part of aging. It also impacts each person differently, as well as all aspects of their life as the disease progresses. There is no cure for Alzheimer's disease at this time, which is why it is important for each of us to do our part on World Alzheimer's Day and throughout the year to raise awareness and address the stigma that surrounds dementia.

Dementia is a broad term which includes a range of brain disorders. Physical changes in the brain cause dementia. Globally, dementia is on the rise and with the baby boomer generation aging, it is becoming a health crisis. Symptoms of dementia may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language, which are severe enough to impede a person's ability to carry out everyday activities. Those affected with dementia may also experience behavioural or mood changes.

There are risk factors associated with dementia. According to the Alzheimer Society of Canada's website, the older you become, the higher the risk ? One in 20 Canadians over the age of 65 and one in four of those over age 85 have Alzheimer's disease. There are seven key modifiable risk factors for the disease which include diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, smoking, depression, cognitive inactivity or low education, and physical inactivity. There are also non-modifiable risk factors, such as age; family history and genetics; gender; and other medical conditions.

Several medications are available to assist with the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and for those patients who respond to them, they may see improvements in their quality of life for several years. However, there still isn't a cure available.

According to the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, 564,000 Canadians are living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. This number is most concerning and stresses the importance for Canadians to do our part to donate, volunteer, participate in research, or become a Dementia Friend to the Alzheimer Society of Canada and local Alzheimer Societies.

Here in Dufferin-Caledon, we are most fortunate to have the Alzheimer Society of Dufferin County providing invaluable services and programs to residents. It was established in 1999 and is one of 38 chapters across Ontario. For more information, please visit the organization's website at <http://www.alzheimer.ca/en/on/chapters-on/dufferincounty?c=1> or contact them by telephone at 519-941-1221.

If we all work together, we can support our friends, family, and neighbours battling this terrible disease and be that much closer to finally finding a cure.

