

ADHD reduces life expectancy by up to 22 years, more than 1.5 million Canadians diagnosed

Written By MIKE BAKER

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a chronic neurodevelopmental disorder affecting approximately 1.5 million Canadians. When left unrecognized and untreated ADHD can have devastating effects on one's life.

A recent study found that ADHD can shorten one's life expectancy by up to 22 years if symptoms are persistent into adulthood. That is 2.5 times greater than the top four risk factors that we focus on as a society; obesity, alcohol use, smoking, and coronary heart disease combined.

So why aren't we paying more attention to ADHD? Most people think of ADHD as a childhood disorder of inattentive and overactive boys that is outgrown. In fact, for most, ADHD impairments continue into adolescence and adulthood resulting in a significant increase in health risks, fewer years of education, more unemployment, increased physical and car accidents, more involvement in the justice system (a third of Canadian inmates are reported to have ADHD) and additional co-existing mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, suicide, and substance abuse.

Russ LeBlanc a past syndicated radio broadcaster, current public speaker, teacher and host and producer of Club ADHD the Podcast knows because he's lived it. He was finally diagnosed with ADHD at the age of 49 after being unsuccessfully treated for depression for decades.

?When I first heard about the results of this study it really hit me hard. Some of the mental and physical health risks highlighted in the CADDAC paper and the study apply to me. But, my ADHD has finally been diagnosed. I'm being treated and that treatment is helping me to actively work on reducing the very health risks that ADHD helped cause.?

The Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada's newly released policy paper, ADHD: A Significant Health Risk, highlights how when left untreated ADHD can be devastating. The paper suggests that a portion of the dollars spent annually in Canada on awareness and prevention of other health risks would be better allocated towards diagnosing and treating ADHD. Since ADHD is the most easily treated psychiatric disorder, this would result in savings to our health, education, child and family, social service and justice budgets.

?Funding and resources available would be better spent on early detection and treatment, rather than paying for the devastating consequences that occur when government's ignore this serious health disorder, says Heidi Bernhardt CADDAC's Founder and President. CADDAC is calling on all provincial, territorial and federal health ministries to start taking ADHD seriously by developing a working group on ADHD to explore how resources for those with ADHD could be improved leading to the reduction in economic and societal costs associated with ADHD.