

## **Bolton hearing clinic warns of greater risk for dementia with untreated hearing loss]**

**By Zachary Roman**

Canadians are encouraged to learn about the stark impact dementia has on Canadians during the month of January.

Each January, the Alzheimer Society of Canada supports and leads Alzheimer's awareness month. The society hopes that by understanding what people with dementia experience every day, people will gain a greater empathy and awareness for those afflicted with the disease.

“Awareness is the first step to fighting stigma, reinforcing human rights and pushing for policy change, as well as other actions that can lift up Canadians living with dementia,” according to the Alzheimer Society of Canada. “Please support Alzheimer's Awareness Month. It's an easy start to helping your fellow Canadians who are living with this serious disease.”

There are a number of ways people can show their support, and one is by talking about Alzheimer's awareness month on social media. The Alzheimer Society has a plethora of tools and information on its website that people can use to spread the word.

Another is to connect with your local Alzheimer society – there are local societies in Peel and Dufferin County. People are also encouraged to learn more about dementia, especially by listening to the stories of people with lived experience.

According to the Alzheimer Society of Canada, there were 597,000 people in Canada living with dementia as of 2020.

By 2030, that number is expected to increase to nearly one million. One in five Canadians has experience caring for someone living with dementia, and in 2020, 61.8 per cent of those living with dementia were women.

Surveys show that 87 per cent of caregivers wish more people understood the realities of caring for someone with dementia.

A Bolton hearing clinic issued a press release for Alzheimer's awareness month sharing research that points towards untreated hearing loss as a possible risk for developing dementia.

While how hearing loss increases the risk of dementia isn't fully understood yet, researchers suggest untreated hearing loss increases the load on the brain by redirecting sounds to puzzle-solving and memory parts of the brain rather than speech interpretation sections of the brain.

According to Wendy Moore of Hear Well Be Well, a 2020 study suggested the brain may stop using those areas usually engaged with interpreting sound, leading to those areas shrinking or degenerating.

John Tiede, hearing instrument specialist and co-CEO of Hear Well Be Well hearing health clinics, said changes to hearing can be gradual so people don't often notice them. In light of the research showing the connection between hearing loss and dementia, Tiede is encouraging people to get their hearing tested.