

Connections

Linking a community of dementia support



Spring into setting active goals

This spring, we're jumping into fitness. Leading an active lifestyle can have a positive impact on the quality of life for people living with dementia, slow down cognitive decline and help boost mood. The Society offers many ways to support your healthy choices including:

- **Minds in Motion®:** The fitness and social program is designed for people living in the early stages of dementia along with their caregiver. Online and in-person options are available, both in English and Cantonese. Learn more at alzbc.org/mm.
- **Webinars:** The Society hosts regular webinars on a range of topics related to living with dementia,

including activities to do at home, activities for warmer weather and activities to do with someone living with dementia. Pre-recorded videos are available to watch online at alzbc.org/ondemand.

- **First Link® Dementia Helpline:** Society staff members provide confidential support to anyone with questions or concerns about dementia, regardless of whether they have a diagnosis. Speak to a staff member for resources including suggested activities and tips. The Helpline is available in English, Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi. Learn more at alzbc.org/dhl.

Get active while supporting the Society!

The *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto, is on May 28. To learn how you can support people affected by dementia in your community, see page 4.

In this issue

Greetings
Caregiver story

Page 2
Page 3

Research
Meet the researcher
Volunteering

Page 5
Page 7
Page 8

Staying active to enhance quality of life

We often think of spring as the season of new beginnings, with longer and warmer days inviting us to take on challenges and set goals. While we're establishing a new routine, it's an opportunity to engage in activities that give us purpose and enhance our quality of life. This spring, we're also celebrating our many volunteers and recognizing their achievements during National Volunteer Week, beginning April 16.

In this issue, we're taking a closer look at the positive impact that physical activity can have on people living with dementia. In addition to sharing tips and information about webinars and suggested activities, we're profiling a researcher who piloted a program to motivate older adults to be more physically active and socially connected. We also share the latest news on the medication called lecanemab.

Spring also brings our flagship fundraiser, the *IG Wealth Management's Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto. We're excited to bring together communities from across the province while raising valuable funds to ensure we can support people affected by dementia. Jill Gratton, honouree for this year's *Walk* in Penticton, talks about her experience as a caregiver for her husband and the joy they share as Minds in Motion® participants. You can also learn about opportunities to volunteer with us, including for the *Walk*. We hope you'll join us in a community near you on May 28!



Jen Lyle
Chief Executive Officer
Alzheimer Society of B.C.

What we've learned from you

In 2022, we asked for your feedback on our newsletters. As we prepare to relaunch them later this year, we would like to share a preview of the survey findings:

- Of the **408 respondents**, 51 per cent were caregivers, 10 per cent were people living with dementia and 23 per cent were family members or friends of someone living with dementia.
- **75 per cent** reported they always or frequently read the newsletters.
- **58 per cent** would like more frequent newsletters (monthly or bimonthly).

- Topics respondents were most interested in:
 - Information about living with dementia or caregiving (78 per cent)
 - Research updates (67 per cent)
 - Personal interest stories (43 per cent)
 - International perspectives (40 per cent)
 - Book suggestions/reviews (38 per cent)

Thanks to everyone who shared their input – and stay tuned for changes!

Building camaraderie with community members



Jill and Mick Gratton have a widened circle of friends who understand what they are going through

“It gets the old grey matter stirring,” Jill Gratton says with a laugh.

Jill is talking about Minds in Motion®, a fitness and social program offered by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. Available throughout the province both in-person and online, Minds in Motion® provides social interaction and gentle physical exercise for people living with any form of early-stage dementia alongside a care partner.

Jill has been attending Minds in Motion® with her husband, Mick Gratton, since 2018. Long-time citizens of Penticton, the couple first met in 1963 and have now been married for 56 years. Mick has been living with dementia for almost 12 years. Thanks to Jill’s dedication and support, he’s never had to face the journey alone.

Jill ensures that she and Mick are as active and healthy as possible, both mentally and physically. It’s also important for them to remain involved with their community; this is one of the main reasons Jill finds Minds in Motion® so valuable. “I’ve met a new group of people, so my circle of friends has widened – and what’s more important, they’re people who all understand what we’re going through,” Jill says.

The program provides people living with dementia an opportunity to get up and move around in a space meant specifically for them. “Mick is comfortable there because it’s something we do together. He doesn’t feel he’s alone. He looks forward to it,” says Jill. “And me? Well, I’m happy when he’s happy.”

They enjoy the variety of activities offered, ranging from chair exercises to brain teasers and team games. “We’re very competitive,” Jill says. “Last week we played Jeopardy. You’d think we were playing for money, the way we had to get the right answer.”

Jill and Mick have been eager to share their positive experiences with Minds in Motion® and have also invited friends who are also on the dementia journey to participate. Jill notes how essential the Minds in Motion® community has been to her as a caregiver, “My group of friends there are in the same position as me – they understand.”

Find motivation and get active with others on the dementia journey at Minds in Motion®. In-person and online options are available. To find a session near you or for more information, visit alzbc.org/mm.

Who are you walking for?

Jill and Mick are being honoured at the Penticton *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer’s* on May 28. Join Jill and Mick to raise funds to support people affected by dementia. For more information or to find an event near you, visit walkforalzheimers.ca.



JOIN US FOR THE IG WEALTH MANAGEMENT WALK FOR ALZHEIMER'S

Join us on Sunday, May 28 for the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto. Walk with us to raise awareness and help people affected by dementia.

Who will you walk for?

Register and fundraise at
walkforalzheimers.ca



Alzheimer Society
BRITISH COLUMBIA

presented by
 **goAuto**

IG WEALTH
MANAGEMENT
**WALK FOR
ALZHEIMER'S**

What does the U.S. FDA approval of lecanemab mean for Canadians?



Lecanemab is a pharmaceutical drug that could potentially slow down some symptoms of early-stage Alzheimer’s disease. Lecanemab is believed to reduce the amyloid plaques in the brain that are a hallmark of Alzheimer’s disease.

In January 2023, following the release of early clinical trial results, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved lecanemab (marketed under the name Leqembi) for use in the U.S.

Lecanemab trial results

The worldwide clinical trial began in March 2019 with 1,795 participants living with early-stage Alzheimer’s disease, including participants from Canada. Lecanemab was administered intravenously every two weeks for 18 months.

Researchers measured participants’ memory, orientation and problem solving, as well as looking at their home life, hobbies and personal care at both the start and end of the trial. Participants who were given lecanemab showed 27 per cent less cognitive decline in comparison to people given the placebo.

It’s currently unclear how such a finding affects the day-to-day lives of people with early-stage Alzheimer’s disease, or for how long the impact persists.

There are also side effects associated with lecanemab – most commonly, headaches and ARIA (amyloid related imaging abnormalities). ARIA side effects include brain swelling and brain bleeds that can be experienced as headaches, confusion, vision changes, dizziness, nausea and seizures.

Given the initial results and side effects, additional (longer) clinical trials are necessary to determine lecanemab’s effectiveness and safety.

Lecanemab in Canada

To date, Health Canada has not approved lecanemab. Presently, the only way Canadians have access to lecanemab is if they are already participating in the ongoing clinical trial. No new participants are being accepted. It will likely be several years before anything is available to the public in Canada.

While lecanemab is not a cure, it “moves the needle” in terms of opening a door for future treatments. The Alzheimer Society of B.C. supports Health Canada’s rigorous assessments of the safety and effectiveness of all drugs related to the treatment of dementia.

Learn more about the study

Read about the FDA’s trial report from November 2022: alzbc.org/lecanemab-study

The impact of physical activity on living with dementia



Incorporating physical activity into one's life is an essential part of cultivating good health. Studies have found that engaging in two to five hours of moderate to

vigorous physical activity weekly appears to reduce the risk of developing dementia. Research also suggests physical activity has a positive effect on the cognitive health of people already living with dementia.

Although it's not fully clear how activity has an impact on dementia, it has been suggested that it reduces cognitive decline by increasing the formation of neurons in the brain. Activity also reduces the likelihood of developing diabetes, hypertension and obesity, all of which are considered risk factors for dementia.

In addition to its cognitive benefits, physical activity has also been shown to increase opportunities for social interaction and improve sleep, mood and self-confidence. Physical activity also reduces the risk of falls by improving balance and mobility. Such benefits enable people living with dementia to live independently for longer. Care partners, too, benefit from activity: it reduces their stress and depression.

The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend adults engage in exercise for a minimum of 150 minutes per week. Activities can be spread across short sessions and can include walking, gardening, seated exercises, tai chi or yoga.

While caregiving may not always leave time for organized fitness activities, there are other ways to increase your physical activity:

- As the weather begins to improve, find a time for you and the person living with dementia to take a walk together. This allows both of you to benefit!
- Look for creative ways to increase your step count. For example, taking the stairs or parking your car further from your destination.

It's important to consider starting with physical activities that you find enjoyable, being mindful to take them at your own pace to avoid risk of injury.

Engaging the body and mind

As dementia progresses, a person's ability to participate in activities will change. For a list of suggested activities ranging from early to late stages of dementia, visit alzbc.org/activities.

Learn more!

Our recent webinar with guest speaker Dr. Teresa Liu-Ambrose explored the importance of physical activity in brain health. Dr. Liu-Ambrose is a physical therapist and a Canada Research Chair at the University of British Columbia, Department of Physical Therapy. She directs the Aging, Mobility and Cognitive Health Laboratory as well as Vancouver General Hospital's Falls Prevention Clinic. To watch the webinar, visit alzbc.org/webinar-Dr-Liu-Ambrose.

Meet the researcher: Dr. Joanie Sims-Gould



Dr. Joanie Sims-Gould

Dr. Joanie Sims-Gould is a scientist with the Active Aging research team, a Health Promotion Consultant and a Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Family Practice at the University of British Columbia. Her primary goal in each of these

roles is to “add life to the later years.”

With the Active Aging research team, one of her key accomplishments has been the design and province-wide implementation of the Choose to Move program. The free, province-wide program provides older adults with motivation and support to become more physically active and socially connected. The program involves working one-on-one with a trained activity coach who creates a tailor-made physical activity plan to meet your health and fitness goals. Currently, Joanie and her team are working on adapting the program to include more equity-deserving groups.

Joanie’s interest in physical activity and social connectedness was borne out of her experiences with her grandmother, who lived with dementia. Her grandmother lived in northwestern Ontario, loved the outdoors and going for walks. However, as her dementia progressed, it became unsafe for her to walk alone. Joanie’s grandparents connected with a local volunteer organization that provided respite services. Each week a companion would accompany Joanie’s

grandmother on a walk, whether by the lake or at the mall. Joanie believes it was one of the most important supports her grandparents received, as it contributed to her grandmother’s sense of health and well-being, while offering a much-needed caregiving break for her grandfather.

Supporting her grandparents on their dementia journey has influenced Joanie’s career path as an advocate for older adults. She’s adamant that if the work in which she’s engaged doesn’t matter in the lives of her grandparents, then it’s not worth doing.

Upcoming webinar details

Dr. Joanie Sims-Gould will be presenting a webinar on physical activity on Wednesday, May 24 at 2 p.m. Her talk will focus on the importance of physical activity, and ways in which we can incorporate more physical activity into our daily lives. To register, visit: alzbc.org/Sims-Gould.

Learn more

- For more information on Active Aging: www.activeagingrt.ca
- For more information on the Choose to Move program: www.choosetomove.ca

It's a great time to join our team!

The Society relies on passionate, kind and well-trained volunteers. Without that vital support, we wouldn't be able to offer programs and services like our support groups and education sessions. Fundraising events like the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, presented by Go Auto, would not be possible. We need your help.

To apply for a volunteer role online, create a profile on our Volunteer Portal, submit an application and indicate your area of interest and availability. Get started and learn about the roles currently available:

Seeking an ongoing role with a fixed schedule? Support group facilitation and administrative assistant roles are available on a variety of days, times and locations across the province.

- To apply, visit alzbc.org/MyImpact
- To learn more about the programs you will be supporting, visit alzbc.org/SG-facilitator

Seeking a one-time, weekend opportunity that you can enjoy with friends or family? The *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, held on Sunday, May 28, 2023, requires day-of-event support at 23 locations across B.C. Sign up today and secure your spot on the team.

- To apply, visit alzbc.org/volunteer-events
- For more information, contact Nick Dunn at ndunn@alzheimercbc.org
- To learn more about the *IG Wealth Management Walk for Alzheimer's*, visit walkforalzheimers.ca.



About Connections

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- **Email** newsletter@alzheimercbc.org
- **Call** 604-681-6530; 1-800-667-3742 (toll-free)
- **Mail** to the Alzheimer Society of B.C.
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Are you a person living with dementia?

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