Société Alzheimer Society
CANADA

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada | Société canadienne de la sclérose en plaques

Parkinson Canada

As health charities supporting individuals with neurological conditions, the Alzheimer Society, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, and Parkinson Canada have natural commonalities in the people they serve and support. A key commonality is the family caregiver who provides support to people living with these respective diseases. Our organizations have partnered to share resources and provide new information and webinars to support family caregivers.

You are not alone!

Life can change direction drastically when a family member or close friend is diagnosed with a chronic health condition like Alzheimer's disease, another form of dementia, multiple sclerosis, or Parkinson's disease. Your suspicions that something was wrong have been proven, but now you have to figure out how to support that person.

You may have never had personal experience with any of these conditions. Suddenly, you find yourself going along to doctor appointments and feeling as if the doctor is speaking a whole other language. If you have never had to be a caregiver before, you probably haven't learned a very important part of a caregiver's vocabulary: "I need help".

It is easy to feel like you are alone. Keep in mind though, that while being a caregiver may be a unique experience to you, being a caregiver is not unique. According to Statistics Canada 2013, 8.1 million Canadians are caregivers. That is one in four Canadians. 54% are women, and 46% are men. 6.1 million caregivers are also trying to deal with employment issues while providing care.

There is a famous quote by former First Lady, Rosalyn Carter: "There are only four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers."

Sooner or later, those 8.1 million Canadians may need some help, just like you. You may need a physical break; you may need help understanding what the doctor has said; or you may need some emotional support from people going through the same thing as you.

One of the common services provided across our organizations is information about the condition you are dealing with. You may not have the opportunity to ask the doctor basic information about the condition or you may find it overwhelming to use the internet to find appropriate, evidenced-based information. There are staff in each of our organizations who may be able to help answer your questions. Knowledgeable and compassionate staff at each organization may be able to provide information and referrals to appropriate local support in your community.

Common reasons that caregivers call us include:

- General questions about different stages of the condition;
- Printed material to share with family;
- How to access medical and social service systems.

While we cannot tell you what to do, we can provide you with resources to help you make informed decisions for yourself and those you care about. Please know that we are there to ensure that not only the person living with the disease, but caregivers like you affected by it are not alone.

For further reading:

Links provided are informational purposes only, and do not necessarily represent an endorsement by the Alzheimer Society of Canada, MS Society of Canada or Parkinson Canada. Always review treatment options with your own health care provider.

Care conversations, it's about you and the person you support
https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/seniors/forum/care-conversation.html
Conversations à propos des soins, c'est entre vous et la personne que vous aidez
https://www.canada.ca/fr/emploi-developpement-social/ministere/aines/forum/conversations-soins.html

Carers Canada/Proches Aidants au Canada
http://www.carerscanada.ca/