

Alzheimer Month Awareness

By MARSHA PHELPS

To help focus public attention on the help available to victims of this disease and their families, the month of November has been declared national Alzheimer Society Awareness Month.

Regarded as the most important public health problem next to cancer, Alzheimer Disease is on the rise. Over 10,000 die each year and over one million Canadians, friends and families of the sufferers, are affected. More than any other illness, physicians, researchers and social workers say Alzheimer exhausts the financial, physical and emotional resources of family caregivers.

The Alzheimer Society of Canada, with over 60 chapters and 6,000 members, provides education, family support, and referral services to help victims and their families realize that they are not alone. The Society welcomes the growing number of Canadians who are contributing time, talent and financial resources toward fighting this disease.

The fourth leading cause of death among Canadians is Alzheimer Disease--a progressive, degenerative brain condition with no known cause or cure. It attacks both men and women from the age of 40 onwards, with those over 65 the most vulnerable. An estimated 300,000 Canadians are affected by Alzheimer Disease. Unless a means of prevention is discovered, this number will more than double in the next decade and by the end of the century, 22% of people over 65 will have this disease.

The course of the disease usually runs from two to twenty years. Initial phase symptoms involve loss of recent memory. Gradually, other mental functions, orientation and levels of activity diminish, along with language and communications capabilities. Finally, the victim may develop seizures, muscular rigidity, causing severe difficulties in ordinary activities of eating, washing and hygiene. The last stages are those in which the victim is bed-ridden, requiring constant nursing care.

Alzheimer Disease has been called the most important public health problem next to cancer. It is the most common form of mental impairment which physicians usually label as 'senility' or 'senile

dementia.' To many people, it is considered part of growing old. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Alzheimer Disease is difficult to diagnose, requiring extensive examination by a competent neurologist. These tests reveal shrinking or atrophy of the brain and alteration or disappearance of nerve cells in or around the cortex.

The greater the abnormalities, the greater the disturbance in intellectual function and memory. Diagnosis of the specific type of dementia--presenile (under 65) or senile (over 65) at age of onset--is very important, since some types, other than Alzheimer Disease, can be effectively treated.

Researchers working on the

causes of the disease have four major theories: 1) there may be a genetic predisposition to acquiring the disease; 2) the cause may be a slow-acting virus released within the brain; 3) environmental factors are suspected, such as abnormal amounts of aluminum deposited in the brain; and, 4) recently it has been discovered that acetylcholine, a molecule in the brain, is depleted in Alzheimer sufferers and that the cells which produce these chemicals are also destroyed.

There are many patterns in the type, severity and sequence of mental changes in this illness. In a few cases, there may be a rapid decline, but more commonly, there are long periods with little change. The best one can do for the patient

is to keep life simple, routine, and calm. Although the person with Alzheimer Disease is often unaware of, or may deny the full extent of his or her limitations, the illness is a source of deep frustration for those afflicted and for their loved ones.

The Alzheimer Society of Canada was incorporated and granted a federal charter in 1978 under the name Société Alzheimer Society. It was the first national society of its kind in the world and acts as a resource for its members, health professionals and for the community at large by providing information both through its chapters and a regularly published newsletter.

Membership is open to all concerned individuals. It is a

charitable, non-profit organization with affiliated organizations all across Canada. The aims of the society are to support and encourage research into Alzheimer Disease and related conditions; to promote public and professional awareness of the disease; to provide support to individuals who are in contact with victims of Alzheimer Disease; to create family resource centres; to address the issues of long-term placement of the Alzheimer patient; and to represent all groups and people involved before all levels of government.

Today there are more than 60 local and provincial affiliates across Canada, numbering some 6,000 members.

A Timely Display

By KEITH DOUCETTE

'Got the time?' Well the York-Sunbury Museum has it in an abundance of shapes and sizes in an exhibit entitled *Time Machines: 19th and Early 20th Century Clocks*. Museum curator Cynthia Wallace-Casey and her staff in co-operation with the York-Sunbury Historical Society, and with the financial assistance of Fredericton's Loyalist Clock Company, have managed to assemble a collection of forty-eight of the finest old time machines to be found in New Brunswick. The vast majority of these clocks have been donated by several of the province's most prominent collectors.

The exhibit itself is a vast array of sight and sound and would be of interest to not only the avid 'clock buff,' but also to any curious observer. As curator Wallace-Casey was quick to point out, the aim of the exhibit is to introduce people to clocks by showing not

only the gradual development of the technology, but also the development of clockmaking as an art form. On both counts the exhibit achieves its goals by supplementing the visual display of the clocks with informative labels and wall charts which serve to make a viewing not only pleasurable but educational.

The exhibit contains what the curator referred to as two prized clocks. The first of these rare and valuable time pieces dates to 1802 and is made of mahogany. It is called a banjo clock and is so named because of its resemblance in shape to that musical instrument. The museum's banjo, although simple in appearance, is valuable because it is one of the earliest examples of this type of clock to be found in the province.

The second prized clock of the collection was made by clockmaker Roman N. Butler between the years 1835-1845. The Stenciled Transition clock is valuable because its works, or insides, are made entirely of wood instead of the more com-

monly used brass.

Other clocks of particular interest include the office clock which belonged to the famed Alexander 'Boss' Gibson, the builder of the Marysville cotton mill, and a solid brass waterproof ship's clock retrieved from a Norwegian freighter which ran aground on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. A favourite is the Vienna Regulator clock made in Austria. This beauty is made of walnut and is impressive because of its artistic ap-

pearance and imposing size. Also to be found are a large collection of parlour clocks and a particular variety of kitchen clocks, the ornately carved Gingerbreads.

All in all, the exhibit is a refreshing change for anyone who is tired of a world seemingly overrun by the highly impersonal digital time piece. Yet, even if you are not of this opinion, the exhibit gives one a chance to view an art form which is gradually disappearing.



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MALAYSIAN CULTURAL NIGHT

A very special thanks to the performers, the cooks, all MSS participants, the MCN Committee and all our guests for the very successful evening we had on November 8, 1986.

Yours very sincerely,

Chin Kong Seah
(Organizing Chairman)