

## Communication Health and Aging: Reaching Out to Canada's Seniors This May

*Speech-Language and Audiology Canada launches new campaign to advocate for seniors' communication health as part of this year's Speech and Hearing Month*

**OTTAWA, ON (May 1, 2015)** — People who have hearing loss are 2 to 5 times more likely to develop dementia. At least 30% of people experience language loss after a stroke. And 85% of people with Parkinson's disease have voice, speech and/or swallowing difficulties. These troubling statistics highlight the need for the Canadian public to start talking about communication health and aging — and Speech-Language and Audiology Canada (SAC) is launching a new "Communication Health and Aging" campaign this May to encourage greater awareness about this issue.

"Communication health refers to our ability to speak, hear and communicate with each other," says Judy Meintzer, SAC Chair. "It's what enables us to connect with one another and it is absolutely critical to the way we live our day-to-day lives. And because older individuals are at greater risk of developing certain communication disorders, we really need to have an open dialogue about seniors' communication health in Canada."

SAC's "Communication Health and Aging" campaign will be the centrepiece of the association's activities during this year's [Speech and Hearing Month](#). Throughout May, SAC and its members and associates will reach out to patients, clients, other health-care professionals, politicians, friends, family and the general public to raise awareness about communication disorders that affect older adults.

For example, many people in Canada are unaware that:

- Only 1 in 5 people who could benefit from a hearing aid actually uses one.
- 95% of people with dementia have difficulty communicating.
- Hearing loss is the third most prevalent chronic condition (behind arthritis and hypertension).

"Many of us don't have to think about it, but for the millions of people in Canada who have a communication disorder, everyday interactions can pose serious challenges," notes Meintzer. "Participating in meetings, socializing with friends and family, discussing treatment options with a doctor or making a phone call to emergency services during a crisis — there are countless ways that communication is crucial to our daily lives."

SAC's goal with the "Communication Health and Aging" campaign is to help the public learn more about the signs and symptoms of communication disorders so that they can identify problems in themselves and their loved ones early on. SAC has developed numerous materials to help promote awareness about communication health and aging that are available at [www.maymonth.ca](http://www.maymonth.ca).

You can increase your chances of improvement or even recovery by being informed and knowing the signs. If you suspect that you or someone you know may have a communication disorder, find a communication

health professional near you at [www.communicationhealth.ca](http://www.communicationhealth.ca). Communication health professionals include speech-language pathologists (S-LPs), who assess and treat speech and language disorders, including swallowing; audiologists, who assess and treat hearing, auditory and balance disorders; and communication health assistants, who work in a supportive capacity with both S-LPs and audiologists.

“For the last couple of years, SAC’s Speech and Hearing Month activities have largely centered on pediatric issues,” says Meintzer. “This year we want to bring attention to the communication disorders that affect Canada’s aging population. We will also continue our promotion of children’s communication health through other activities focused on youth, such as the Early Identification Campaign and 2015 Kids Contest.”

### Connecting Online for Speech and Hearing Health

SAC will post, tweet and blog on social media over the coming weeks to discuss the importance of communication health. The public is invited to use the hashtag **#maymonth** to follow and participate in the conversation. In Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax throughout May, the association will also run a major public advertising campaign to celebrate the important work of communication health professionals. Individuals can join the conversation by using the hashtag **#communicationhealth**. More information about this advertising campaign will be available on Monday May 4 at [www.sac-oac.ca](http://www.sac-oac.ca).

Full details about SAC’s Speech and Hearing Month campaign, including how to get involved, can be found at [www.maymonth.ca](http://www.maymonth.ca).

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*Speech-Language and Audiology Canada (SAC) is a member-driven organization that supports, promotes and elevates the professions of our members and associates. We are the only national organization passionately supporting and representing speech-language pathologists, audiologists and communication health assistants inclusively. Through this support, we champion the needs of people with communication disorders. Visit us at [www.sac-oac.ca](http://www.sac-oac.ca) to learn more.*

#### Media Inquiries:

Nicole Chatelain, Communications Specialist

Telephone: 613.567.9968 x243

Email: [nicole@sac-oac.ca](mailto:nicole@sac-oac.ca)

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