

RESULTS ARE IN AND CANADIANS KNOW ABOUT 'MOST' THINGS PURPLE, UNFORTUNATELY THEY'RE NOT MAKING THE EPILEPSY CONNECTION

The 5th annual Purple Day aims to address myths, reduce stigma and shine a 'purple light' on the facts when it comes to epilepsy in Canada

HALIFAX, NS, March 26, 2014 – The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance (CEA) and those affected by the neurological disorder are proud to speak out on March 26 - the fifth annual Purple Day - in support of epilepsy awareness. The grassroots awareness initiative, which was officially recognized by parliament in 2013, encourages an open dialogue about epilepsy to elevate understanding and awareness among Canadians.

To establish exactly how much Canadians know about epilepsy and the official awareness day, the CEA conducted a survey with Leger The Research Intelligence Group and asked Canadians some pointed questions – the results were surprising. When it comes to common associations with the colour purple, respondents were quick to make the link to an array of fruits and vegetables, gemstones, as well as, the historical significance to royalty, but only a shocking three per cent drew a parallel to epilepsy for which purple is the official colour.

Epilepsy, defined as recurring seizures are a daily reality for the more than 300,000 Canadians who live with the disorder. The CEA was curious to understand what gaps exist when it comes to the knowledge Canadians have about seizures and the results of the survey varied.

Canadians were least able to identify the specifics of seizures – with only 56 per cent able to correctly identify that seizures last only a minute or two and only 41 per cent able to correctly identify that there are multiple types of seizures. That said, more than two-thirds of Canadians knew that epilepsy is a neurological disease and that some patients might experience advanced warnings of an imminent seizure.

“Each year on March 26th, we want to do our best to make epilepsy part of your conversation at home,” says Cassidy Megan who founded Purple Day at the age of 9. “Since we started to speak out about epilepsy five years ago, the awareness activity has grown. We are gradually making a big difference in Canada, as well as, in countries around the world when it comes to better understanding this disorder and we won't stop here.”

Despite some awareness of epilepsy there still exists a great deal of misinformation that needs to be addressed. The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance hopes that Canadians will take a moment on Purple Day to learn one new thing about epilepsy and how the people who live with the disorder are impacted on a daily basis.

“I was surprised by some of the results of the survey and am hopeful that through the positive persistence of the local epilepsy groups, that we can address old myths and inaccurate information,” says Gail Dempsey, President of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance. “One of our goals this year is to continue to build upon what Canadians know about epilepsy seizures, especially among those first-responders who are typically the main point of contact when an individual has a seizure. Identifying the signs of a seizure and quickly addressing the situation are critical - this is an area we hope to enhance for those first-line staff.”

Purple Day increases awareness, reduces stigma and empowers individuals living with epilepsy and their families to take action in their communities. Canadians are encouraged to learn more about epilepsy today and all year long. There are hundreds of ambassadors in 70 countries worldwide who will be participating in the 2014 Purple Day activities, by wearing purple or getting involved in Purple Day awareness or fundraising events.

About Purple Day

Purple Day for Epilepsy is held each year on March 26th and is dedicated to raising awareness about epilepsy. It helps reduce stigma and empowers individuals living with epilepsy to take action in their communities. Purple Day was founded in 2008 by nine-year-old Cassidy Megan of Nova Scotia, and named after the internationally recognized colour for epilepsy, lavender. Purple Day was launched nationally and internationally by the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance. The Anita Kaufmann foundation joined as a partner in 2009. Eisai Limited is the official partner for Purple Day 2014. For more information, please visit www.purpleday.org or www.epilepsymatters.com.

About the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance

The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance (CEA) is a Canada-wide network of grassroots organizations dedicated to the promotion of independence and quality of life for people with epilepsy and their families, through support services, information, advocacy, and public awareness. For more information, please visit www.epilepsymatters.com.

About the Survey

A survey of 1500 Canadians was completed online between March 4th and March 7th, 2014 using Leger's online panel, LegerWeb. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20.

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