



First official Purple Day in Canada brings epilepsy awareness to Parliament Hill

Parliamentarians encouraged to promote epilepsy education

Ottawa (March 26, 2013) - Today, Purple Day for Epilepsy is being observed for the first time in Ottawa and across the country as the official day for epilepsy awareness, since the Purple Day Act passed with unanimous support in June 2012.

On Parliament Hill, members of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance (CEA) have gathered with the founder of Purple Day, 14-year-old Cassidy Megan, and her M.P. and author of the Purple Day Act, the Hon. Geoff Regan, to spread epilepsy awareness among Parliamentarians and encourage them to promote education about the disorder within their constituencies.

“When I first found out I had epilepsy, I was scared and thought I was the only one with epilepsy. I didn't want anyone to know about my seizures because I felt embarrassed and alone,” said Cassidy Megan. “I wanted people to know there are different types of seizures and that they shouldn't be afraid. I am so thankful to Mr. Regan who has helped me and others because now we have a special day to celebrate epilepsy awareness in Canada. The more people learn about epilepsy, and with the right support and care, people like me can enjoy life, just like everyone else.”

All-party support for epilepsy legislation

In Canada, Purple Day was first recognized as the official day for epilepsy awareness on June 28, 2012, in an Act of Parliament put forward by the Hon. Geoff Regan, M.P. for Halifax West. Bill C-278 met with resounding all-party support and became the only legislation of its kind in Canada. The Act demonstrates meaningful support to the 300,000 Canadians living with epilepsy and helps to reduce the stigma and discrimination that is often associated with the disorder.

“I am proud to be part of this initiative, which is helping to empower people with epilepsy to speak out about their disorder,” said Hon. Geoff Regan, author of the Purple Day Act. “I am grateful to Cassidy Megan and the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance for their tireless efforts to improve the quality of life for people with epilepsy.”

Purple Day increases awareness, reduces stigma and empowers individuals living with epilepsy to take action in their communities. Canadians are encouraged to learn more about epilepsy throughout the month of March, culminating with Purple Day on March 26. There are hundreds of ambassadors in 70 countries worldwide that will be participating in the 2013 Purple Day activities, by wearing purple or getting involved in Purple Day awareness or fundraising events.

Common disorder not well understood

Epilepsy affects over 300,000 Canadians and over 50 million people worldwide. Epilepsy is characterized as a group of disorders of the central nervous system, specifically the brain, and is characterized by recurrent unprovoked seizures. Despite its prevalence, epilepsy is not well-understood. According to *The Impact of Epilepsy on Canadians* survey conducted in late 2011, many Canadians living with epilepsy experience social isolation, work barriers and relationship issues.

“Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological disorders in the world, but too many people still don’t know the facts,” said Gail Dempsey, president of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance. “By bringing epilepsy awareness to our government representatives on this historic day, we hope to deepen all Canadians’ understanding of the disorder, dispel the myths surrounding it, and improve the lives of those living with epilepsy.”

About Purple Day

Purple Day for Epilepsy is held each year on March 26 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 internationally in 2009. The Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia and the Anita Kaufmann Foundation in the United States are the global partners for the Purple Day campaign. UCB Canada Inc. is the exclusive Canadian biopharmaceutical partner for the 2013 Purple Day campaign. For more information, please visit www.purpleday.org.

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.

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