



## 44 per cent of Canadians are uncertain about seizure first aid

### Purple Day founder dispels myths about epilepsy

**Halifax (March 22, 2012)** – This year, Purple Day for Epilepsy founder Cassidy Megan wishes to correct how seizure first aid is portrayed on television and practiced on the street. A new poll commissioned by the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance and conducted by Harris/Decima reveals that when asked what they would do if they saw someone experiencing a seizure, only five per cent of Canadians indicated they think they would stay calm and only four per cent think they would speak to the person reassuringly. These facts convinced Cassidy, a Halifax teen who lives with epilepsy, to stay focused on education and dispelling myths about Canada’s second most common neurological disorder.

Purple Day for Epilepsy is held each year around the world on March 26, and is dedicated to raising awareness about the disorder. In Canada, Purple Day for Epilepsy could soon be made “official.” The House of Commons has expressed unanimous support of Bill C-278 – “the Purple Day Bill” – and, after passing third reading in early March, it currently sits with the Senate. The swift passing of this Bill is a meaningful show of support for the 300,000 Canadians living with epilepsy and their families.

#### Epilepsy on TV

“One of the things I would like to do for Purple Day this year is change how they show epilepsy on TV,” says Cassidy. “It really upsets me that so many programs show epilepsy, and how to deal with it, the wrong way. It frustrates me because it makes all the hard work we are doing to educate people about our disorder even harder. It can also make people feel afraid to tell other people that they have epilepsy.”

A study conducted by Dalhousie Medical School researchers, who investigated whether medical television dramas portray proper seizure first aid, concluded that seizure first aid is depicted inappropriately almost half of the time on the most popular shows. When analyzing the seizures depicted on *Grey’s Anatomy*, *House*, *Private Practice*, and in the last five seasons of *ER*, 46 per cent of the dramatized medical responses by the doctor and nurse actors were considered inappropriate.<sup>i</sup>

#### Seizure first aid

Given the influence of the media, Cassidy is challenging all Canadians who have learned seizure first aid from television medical dramas to educate themselves on what to do if they approach a person experiencing a seizure. Her vision for 2012, which can be viewed at [www.purpleday.org](http://www.purpleday.org), is supported by the 25 pan-Canadian member organizations of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance (CEA).

“Inaccuracies and old myths about seizure first aid have plagued our communities for years” says Gail Dempsey, President of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance. “One percent of Canadians are living with Epilepsy, and ten percent of us will experience a single seizure in our lives. Anyone can have a seizure at any time and in any place. It is essential that we learn how to recognize the various types of seizures and the simple first aid steps that could save a life.”

To learn more about seizure first aid, the appropriate way to respond to a person experiencing a seizure and how to recognize the difference between convulsive and non-convulsive seizures, please visit the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance’s website at [www.epilepsymatters.com](http://www.epilepsymatters.com) and follow the tips below.

1. Don't panic! You can help!
2. Allow plenty of space
3. Protect from injury
4. Loosen anything tight around the neck
5. Put something soft under the head
6. Turn to the side to prevent choking
7. NEVER put anything in the mouth
8. NEVER restrain
9. Longer than 5 minutes-Ambulance
10. After, offer support and allow rest

### **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 2012 Purple Day campaign. For more information, please visit [www.purpleday.org](http://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. As the voting member of the International Bureau of Epilepsy (IBE), the CEA is the voice for those living with epilepsy in Canada and internationally. The IBE is the international organization that serves to develop, support and link national epilepsy organizations around the world and exists to improve the quality of life of all people with epilepsy and their families and caregivers. The Canadian Epilepsy Alliance works with the IBE and participates in global initiatives representing those living with epilepsy in Canada.

### **About the survey**

This survey was commissioned by the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance and conducted by Harris/Decima via their telephone omnibus between March 15 to 19, 2012, with a national random sample of 1,002 adult Canadians aged 18 years and over and is considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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*Cassidy has inspired Canadians from coast to coast to become Purple Day ambassadors. Their willingness to stand up and share their stories has greatly reduced the stigma associated with epilepsy and has empowered individuals living with the disorder. To speak with a Purple Day ambassador and for more information please contact:*

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<sup>i</sup> The Canadian Journal of Neurological Sciences, Volume 38, No.5 – September 2011. *Depiction of Seizure First Aid Management in Medical Television Dramas*. Andrew D. Moeller, Jeremy J. Moeller, Susan R. Rahey, R. Mark Sadler