



# NHCC

NEUROLOGICAL HEALTH CHARITIES CANADA

## CANADIAN ACTION PLAN FOR BRAIN HEALTH: Charting the Course in a Changed World



### Brain health is essential to Canadians

- The World Health Organization says neurological disorders are one of the greatest threats to public health today <sup>i</sup>.
- Brain conditions are the largest cause of disability worldwide <sup>ii</sup>.
- One in three Canadians will be affected by a brain or nervous system illness, disorder or injury within their lifetimes.
- Neurological and mental health disorders cost the Canadian economy \$61 billion annually <sup>iii</sup> — more than cancer and cardiovascular disease combined.
- They make it harder to work, succeed academically and participate in everyday activities, resulting in lost income, financial hardship <sup>iv</sup> and lost productivity for Canada as a whole.

### COVID-19 has had a disproportional impact on Canadians living with brain conditions

- The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many negative impacts for people with brain conditions, already struggling to obtain vital services. They have faced cancelled medical and rehabilitation appointments, scarce medications and medical supplies, social isolation and cessation of most services and supports, resulting, for many, in an increase of depression and anxiety.<sup>v</sup>

### NHCC offers a way to chart the course in a changed world

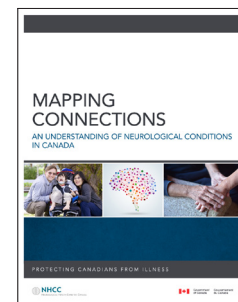
NHCC urges the Government of Canada, working with provincial and territorial governments, to meet this challenge head-on by:

- Investing in basic, clinical and population health research to determine the negative impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians affected by brain conditions;
- Working with NHCC and its member organizations to develop a model for neurological conditions that integrates health and support care services to deliver better and more coordinated care, and;
- Taking immediate action to assist brain health charities to continue to serve vulnerable Canadians affected by brain conditions.

### Neurological Health

#### Charities Canada (NHCC)

is a coalition of organizations that represent people with brain diseases, disorders and injuries in Canada. NHCC joined the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Health Canada in planning and co-managing the National Population Health Study of Neurological Conditions (2009–2013). It resulted in *Mapping Connections*, the report of the most comprehensive study of neurological conditions ever undertaken in Canada.



**We believe these recommendations would help stabilize a vital part of the Canadian economy and assist recovery as Canada emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic.**

## SOLUTIONS

- 1 Fund basic, clinical and population health research to examine how COVID-19 impacts the central and peripheral nervous systems and the implications for individuals living with brain conditions.**
  - Increasingly, research is finding COVID-19 causes neurological and/or psychiatric damage — not just respiratory problems. Two UK-based studies (one in *Brain*<sup>vi</sup> and one in *The Lancet*<sup>vii</sup>) found both neurological and neuropsychiatric complications in people who had experienced COVID-19 infections. Further research is required to learn what additional damage the virus might cause in people already impacted by brain conditions.
- 2 Work with NHCC to test an expanded chronic care model for neurological conditions that integrates health and support care services to deliver better and more coordinated care.**
  - COVID-19's harmful impact on nursing homes and long-term care homes affected Canadians living with brain conditions, not just the frail elderly. All too often, individuals were in the homes because of the lack of community supports.
  - Better models of care delivery are urgently needed. Working with government, NHCC proposes to test an Expanded Chronic Care Model for Neurological Conditions. This model came out of the *Mapping Connections* report and the National Population Health Study of Neurological Conditions.
- 3 Fund charities and non-profit organizations, including charities serving Canadians affected by brain conditions so they can continue their vital role in providing crucial programs and filling gaps in health care services.**
  - COVID-19 and the resulting shutdown meant many individuals living with brain conditions could no longer access medical care, hospital appointments, rehabilitation and social work services. Some experienced medication shortages and lack of access to medical supplies.
  - Many individuals found that they were experiencing increased anxiety and depression and became even more reliant on the not-for-profit sector to provide support.
  - Charities stepped in to fill these gaps while, at the same time, having to lay off staff and curtail regular programming as fundraising came to a halt.

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on Canadians and the Canadian economy. Going forward, we can choose to attempt to return to “normal”, or as a society, we can take this opportunity to make the urgent changes that will improve life for all Canadians. NHCC is willing and able to bring the expertise of Canadians with lived experience to the table. We look forward to the opportunity to work together in the near future.

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<sup>i</sup> Accessed at [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/neurology/neurodiso/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/neurology/neurodiso/en/)

<sup>ii</sup> Global, regional, and national burden of neurological disorders during 1990–2015: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2015. *The Lancet*. VOLUME 16, ISSUE 11, P877-897, NOVEMBER 01, 2017. Accessed at [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanneur/article/PIIS1474-4422\(17\)30299-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanneur/article/PIIS1474-4422(17)30299-5/fulltext)

<sup>iii</sup> 2016 Report of INMHA Evaluation Panel from the CIHR Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction

<sup>iv</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. *Mapping Connections: An understanding of neurological conditions in Canada*. Ottawa (ON): Public Health Agency of Canada; 2014. 98 p. Report No.: ISBN 978-1-100-24442-6, p. 24

<sup>v</sup> NHCC survey of member organizations, April and June 2020. [www.mybrainmatters.ca](http://www.mybrainmatters.ca)

<sup>vi</sup> Paterson, RW et al. The emerging spectrum of COVID-19 neurology: clinical, radiological and laboratory findings, *Brain*, July 8 2020.

<sup>vii</sup> Varatharaj, A et al. Neurological and neuropsychiatric complications of COVID-19 in 153 patients: a UK-wide surveillance study, *The Lancet*, June 25, 2020