2017 – 18 ANNUAL REPORT

Nobody walks alone
Dr. Mari DeMarco slips in and out of bustling bloodwork labs backstage at St. Paul’s Hospital. On the other side of the curtain are the people most directly affected by her diagnostic work. These are our friends, family members and colleagues whose treatment hinges on early test results. Working at one of the busiest hospitals in the province, Dr. DeMarco is bridging the gap between the dementia research we read about in the news and the practical application affecting people in our communities.

Within the bloodwork lab, a sorting area for biofluid samples, vials of blood stand in densely-packed refrigeration units. Some will follow Dr. DeMarco to a separate lab and mass spectrometer – the machine at the core of her Alzheimer Society of B.C.-funded research to develop dementia diagnostic tests. The spectrometer is revolutionary for its ability to isolate predictors of Alzheimer’s disease by measuring compounds by molecular weight.

“It’s basically just a very expensive bathroom scale,” Dr. DeMarco laughs, in reference to the extreme accuracy, reliability and cutting-edge nature of the device.

Because of their groundbreaking work with the spectrometer, Dr. DeMarco and her team regularly field questions from top international researchers. Her belief in collaboration and information-sharing around the globe is key to transforming the experience of people living with dementia in B.C. and beyond.

“It’s so important to have a more confident diagnosis earlier. People need to know what they’re facing, so they know they can access supports and resources such as First Link®,” says Dr. DeMarco, who experienced first-hand the effect of dementia after a close family member was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

“Diagnosis is a crucial first step in staying informed and planning for the future.”
– Dr. Mari DeMarco

Despite the needs of people living with dementia, research in diagnostics often faces funding challenges when up against some of the more experimental studies in search of a cure. This, amid the frustrations of people living with dementia who frequently endure years of worsening symptoms before receiving a diagnosis and support.

Research donations help scientists like Dr. DeMarco change the future for people affected by dementia.
The First Link® Dementia Helpline is for anyone who:
- is interested in dementia
- is concerned about their memory
- has been diagnosed with dementia
- works with people living with dementia
- just wants to know more

Provincewide: 1-800-936-6033
Lower Mainland: 604-681-8651
Hours: Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Commitment to privacy
The Alzheimer Society of B.C. is committed to protecting the privacy of people who connect with us and to making sure that we are up to date with relevant legislation and best practice. Over the last year we continued to provide training for Society staff and volunteers to ensure we continually meet privacy standards in all of our activities, from the delivery of support services, to working with our valued donors, to holding fundraising events. For more information, visit www.alzheimerbc.org/privacy or contact our Privacy Officer at privacy@alzheimerbc.org.

Front cover images
Left: Volunteers walk to honour people affected by dementia at the Investors Group Walk for Alzheimer’s in Vancouver.
Middle: Myrna Norman, a member of the Alzheimer Society of B.C.’s Leadership Group of People Living with Dementia, shares her story for a national Alzheimer’s Awareness Month campaign.
Right: Minds in Motion® Coordinator Sonia Furstrand works with a participant during a session of the fitness and social program for people in the early stages of dementia.