

Canadian Menopause Coalition Launched in Ottawa

OTTAWA, October 15, 2009 — This year the number of female baby boomers in Canada who have either reached menopause, or are experiencing perimenopausal symptoms, will reach an all-time high. Since Statistics Canada reported in 2006 that one in three Canadians were part of the baby boom, this group of Canadian women represents a significant demographic phenomenon.

Today, 14 national health organizations addressed this reality with the launch of a national coalition to put a spotlight on menopause and women's health at midlife. Just days before the observance of World Menopause Day on October 18, the newly created Canadian Menopause Coalition seeks to bring menopause, a natural health transition that affects the lives of millions of Canadian women, out of the shadows. The goal is to raise awareness and understanding while speeding up the knowledge transfer process that conveys up-to-date research evidence to women and the health professionals who care for them.

"It's a wake-up call to all of us involved in women's health and the provision of care," said Dr. Jennifer Blake, Chief of Women's Health at Sunnybrook Health Centre in Toronto and a Member of the Coalition. "Today's woman experiencing menopause is just as likely to be raising young children, chairing a board meeting, or actively pursuing career ambitions as she may be contemplating retirement. It's no time to be sidelined with menopause symptoms that can be managed with information, access to good care, and sensible treatment options."

Blake notes that interest in menopause issues is escalating. A series of public information forums offered in the spring by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (SOGC) attracted thousands of women from coast to coast. "They often drove hundreds of kilometers to hear information from experts they can trust, to get solid information about their health during menopause."

"The menopause experience is different for every woman, and it's true, some have virtually no symptoms. But even if they aren't suffering from troubling symptoms, menopause is still an opportune time to make positive changes in lifestyle, diet and exercise that will have substantial impact on your heart health as you age", says Michele Turek, an Ottawa-based cardiologist and the Canadian Cardiovascular Society's official representative on the Coalition.

Currently, it is not well understood that the menopause transition has potential implications for women in all aspects of their lives — their physical and mental health, their cognitive ability, their emotional state as well as the quality of their family and work life. Troublesome disruptive menopause symptoms can sometimes get in the way of a woman's ability to fulfill her roles and maintain her quality of life.

"Our message to women is that while menopause may be a natural transition in a woman's life, accurate advice, support and information are important to help each woman meet the individual needs of her personal transition," says Dr. Fay Sliwin, a family doctor in Toronto and a representative on the Coalition from The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC). "Through the CFPC's involvement with the Coalition, we hope to enhance the family physicians' ability to support Canadian women during

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menopause and reassure Canadian women that their family doctor is a valuable resource to help them through this stage of their life.”

Collaboration, information sharing, communications and health practitioner education will be the priority activities of the Coalition. Working through a secretariat established by the SOGC, the Coalition will use its respective communications vehicles to distribute timely, credible information about menopause and midlife health to target audiences.

“We all have websites, research committees, and communications strategies focused on women’s health,” said Dr. Wulf Utian, Executive Director of the North American Menopause Society (NAMS) and a member of the Coalition. “Through the Coalition, we can leverage the expertise in each of our organizations to make sure women are getting the information and the care they deserve during this life transition.”

The Coalition is also determined to address the unique health and information needs of Aboriginal women, women in rural and remote locations, new Canadians, and women who have experienced surgical menopause. “Part of the challenge in menopause awareness is reaching out and finding the people who aren’t in our clinics, or who live in remote areas where access to current information, the Internet, even a health-care provider, is a real challenge,” says Dr. Karl Stobbe, President of the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada (SRPC).

The Coalition will work on interpreting complex scientific health research and putting potential health risk information in terms that non-practitioners can understand. “Sometimes, it’s hard to understand the true risks associated with certain health conditions and treatments until those complex issues are put into context,” says Dr. Blake. “We’re hoping to use the specific expertise of each Coalition partner to help women understand what the research tells us about the potential risks and benefits associated with various menopause treatments.

The Coalition is comprised of some of Canada’s most influential health organizations and professional women’s health societies. It grew out of an exploratory meeting in 2008 where common concerns and resources were shared. A key outcome of that meeting was an agreement that the needs of women’s health at midlife could be better met by sharing information and working together to disseminate it to greater numbers of Canadian women in their 40s, 50s and beyond.

The Canadian Menopause Coalition announced today includes representatives from:

1. Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada <http://www.anac.on.ca>
2. Canadian Association of Nurses for Women and Newborns
<http://www.canwn-aicfn.ca/>
3. Canadian Cardiovascular Society <http://www.ccs.ca>
4. Canadian Foundation for Women's Health <http://www.cfwf.org>
5. Canadian Pharmacists Association <http://www.pharmacists.ca>
6. Canadian Society of Endocrinology and Metabolism <http://www.endo-metab.ca>
7. The College of Family Physicians of Canada <http://www.cfpc.ca>
8. Federation of Medical Women of Canada <http://www.fmw.ca>

9. North American Menopause Society <http://www.menopause.org>
10. Osteoporosis Canada <http://www.osteoporosis.ca>
11. Ovarian Cancer Canada <http://www.ovariancanada.org>
12. SIGMA - Canadian Menopause Society <http://www.sigmamenopause.com>
13. Society of Rural Physicians of Canada <http://www.srpc.ca>
14. Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada <http://www.sogc.org>,
www.menopauseandu.ca, [sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

Two other organizations will participate as observers:

- Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors
- Canadian Rheumatology Association

In its initial phase, the Coalition will work together on identifying and distributing existing information via currently available communications networks that include their professional newsletters, blogs and websites. The SOGC's menopause website at www.menopauseandu.ca will house much of the new information flowing from the research community or from specific health disciplines. The Coalition has a unique URL: www.canadianmenopausecoalition.ca

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Other Backgrounders

Canadian Menopause Coalition – Member Organizations
Menopause Fact Sheet
Spokesperson Biographies

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SOGC website: www.sogc.org