



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Run-funded research project to learn how to measure pain in dementia patients who can't express it **Pain may go undetected in more than 40 per cent of cases**

Vancouver, April 29, 2008 – Imagine being in pain but unable to express it? This is the unfortunate reality for many seniors suffering from dementia and multiple co-morbid conditions that involve pain. The good news is that it's the focus of a research effort to be funded by proceeds from the May 10 BMO Pacific Spirit Run.

"A research study on the development of a likelihood of pain measure for cognitively impaired seniors is a priority project to be funded by money raised by Tapestry Foundation for Health Care through the Pacific Spirit Run," said Ann Corrigan, CEO of Tapestry Foundation for Health Care.

Existing research has shown that pain among highly frail and cognitively impaired dementia patients in nursing homes may be under-detected by clinical staff, due primarily to the subjective nature of pain and the inability of current pain assessment methods to detect the presence of pain among these patients.

"Research has shown that clinicians can miss detecting pain in residents in more than 40 per cent of cases because of a resident's level of cognitive impairment," said Dr. Jean Francois Kozak, director of research for the Centre for Healthy Aging at Providence (CHAP), Providence Health Care.

The study focuses on two major questions: how to know if a person is in pain and what should be done to alleviate that pain. The overall goals of the study are to develop and pilot test a new pain assessment and pain management protocol for profoundly cognitively impaired residents. The measure -- the likelihood of pain index -- will be based on multiple mode assessments (e.g., known clinical condition, body response, change in behaviour patterns, etc.) and will be linked to standardized care plans for managing pain.

The index will be validated against residents with mild cognitive impairment who are known to be in pain against similar residents known not to be in pain. When validated, the new pain index will become the recommended assessment protocol within Providence Health Care's residential care program.

Although some pain assessment tools have been developed for this patient group -- such as rating of facial expressions -- their effectiveness is severely limited due to methodological biases. For example, pain ratings using facial expressions can be negatively affected by clinical conditions such as facial paralysis due to stroke or by lifelong learned cultural experiences (e.g., lack of facial expression is common among certain ethnic groups).

The Pacific Spirit Run's goal is to raise \$100,000 for dementia research. Dementia is a growing concern for our aging population. By 2031, more than three-quarters of a million Canadians will

be diagnosed with the disease. It is not a normal part of aging. New and better treatment options are essential to improve the quality of life for those affected by this devastating and oftentimes hereditary disease.

The Pacific Spirit Run takes place Saturday, May 10, starting at 9 a.m. at the Triumpf Building, UBC, 4004 Wesbrook Mall. There is a 10 km timed route for runners, a 5 km route for runners/walkers and a 2.5 km paved route for families and those in wheelchairs. To register, visit www.PacificSpiritRun.com or pick up registration forms at Ladysport, Forerunners, Choices Markets and the Tapestry Foundation for Health Care office located at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital.

To make a donation for dementia research, call 604.877.8335, or visit www.tapestryfoundation.ca.

The Tapestry Foundation for Health Care was established last spring as an umbrella fundraising organization to serve and support seven of eight Providence Health Care facilities including Mount Saint Joseph Hospital, Holy Family Hospital, St. Vincent's Hospital Langara, St. Vincent's Campus of Care, Brock Fahrni Pavilion, Marion Hospice and Youville Residence. The Foundation supports these sites by raising funds for medical equipment, programs, services, education, and research in the field of elder care.

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Contact: Michele Penz
Calico Communications for Tapestry Foundation for Health Care
Tel: 778.888.2249 Email: calicocomm@telus.net