



**Mood Disorders Society of Canada**  
Société pour **les troubles de l'humeur** du Canada

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Improving Care for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

**OTTAWA**, March 2, 2012 - - The Mood Disorders Society of Canada (MDSC) today issued a comprehensive new Report to the Government of Canada on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which calls for a new national strategy to overhaul the way the disorder is handled in the Canadian healthcare system. Entitled *Out of Sight, Not Out of Mind*, the Report aims to improve access to expert diagnostic and treatment care for PTSD sufferers and their families, while eroding the social stigma that surrounds the disorder.

A critical objective of the proposed new national strategy on PTSD would be to break the unfounded perception that PTSD is just a soldier's disorder. As explored in the report, PTSD can affect anyone experiencing a traumatic event, at any time, with little to no warning. In addition to the emotional trauma of wartime experienced by many soldiers, other causes of PTSD range from natural disasters to personal crises, such as divorce, loss of a loved one, injury, sexual or emotional abuse, childhood trauma or any number of other life-altering experiences.

PTSD is one of several anxiety disorders that can make a sufferer feel intense, prolonged feelings of fright and distress for no clear reason. Some people experience such severe psychological stress from a traumatic event that it continues to affect them long after with flashbacks and nightmares, making it difficult to resume a normal life. No matter what emotional damage sets it off, PTSD can be devastating for those inflicted with the disorder. Many people with PTSD often suffer alone without appropriate diagnosis and adequate support, sometimes leading to severe depression and suicide.

"PTSD exacts a terrible toll on thousands of Canadians, leaving many of them feeling hopeless and isolated from society and even their families," says Phil Upshall, National Executive Director of the Mood Disorders Society of Canada. "Through our own research and through input from dozens of leaders in the field across the country, we've put together recommendations we believe will increase support for PTSD sufferers and their families, will lead to improvements in research, education and system capacity, and will encourage health policy makers to engage in concrete action to battle this devastating illness."

In part, the report recommends:

- Creating a national PTSD network that will work to advance PTSD research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment in an integrated and cohesive way across Canada;
- Developing an PTSD Anti-Stigma Campaign, jointly funded by Health Canada and the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Enhancing the knowledge of physicians about the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD, including information on available patient resources and support networks;
- Educating PTSD sufferers and their families on available support networks and resources to improve their accessibility; and
- Forging a national PTSD research agenda to further understand triggers and optimal treatments of the disorder.

“Although education and awareness have improved over the last decade, there still remains much work to do,” Upshall says. “Through the alignment of research, prevention and treatment efforts, Canada will create a strong, coordinated fabric of world-leading resources, tools and innovations to provide the support desperately needed by PTSD sufferers and their loved ones.”

The Mood Disorders Society of Canada’s report and recommendations stem from a meeting at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa last October where the organization brought together more than 70 experts on PTSD and parliamentarians to discuss the disorder and associated critical issues of health system capacity, scientific research, family supports and steps needed to reduce stigma.

In addition to its recommendations on PTSD, the Mood Disorders Society of Canada has also been calling on the federal government to take action to help beat Canada’s depression epidemic. The organization is asking the government to include in the 2012 budget a one-time funding commitment of \$5 million as seed money to launch a national network of patient-focused depression research and intervention centres.

The report is available on the MDSC website at:

[http://www.mooddorderscanada.ca/documents/Advocacy/PTSD\\_Report\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mooddorderscanada.ca/documents/Advocacy/PTSD_Report_EN.pdf)

A backgrounder is also available on their website at:

[http://www.mooddorderscanada.ca/documents/Advocacy/PTSD\\_Backgrounder\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mooddorderscanada.ca/documents/Advocacy/PTSD_Backgrounder_EN.pdf)

**About the Mood Disorders Society of Canada:** The Mood Disorders Society of Canada is a national, not-for-profit, consumer-driven, voluntary health charity committed to ensuring that the voices of consumers, family members and caregivers are heard on issues relating to mental health and mental illness; and in particular with regard to depression, bipolar illness and other associated mood disorders. The Mood Disorders Society of Canada is working on raising the awareness of mood disorders as treatable medical disorders and eliminating barriers to full community participation by reducing discrimination and stigma among the public, treatment and service providers, and governments.

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