



**For Immediate Release**

## **Mental health concerns on the minds of Canadians**

*Mood Disorders Society of Canada reports 56 per cent of Canadians have worried they suffer from depression*

**GUELPH, ON: May 1, 2008** – A recent survey<sup>1</sup> commissioned for the Mood Disorders Society of Canada indicates that two-thirds (67 per cent) of Canadians know someone who suffers from depression. Moreover, over half (56 per cent) say they have worried about suffering from this disabling disease, at some point in their life.

The survey also revealed that Canadians recognize common emotional indicators of depression, but most remain unaware of some key physical symptoms.

“These findings support the value of increased dialogue and public education on mental health. Our families, communities, employers and health professionals need to be better equipped on symptom recognition. Canadians must be encouraged to seek help instead of worrying silently if they suspect depression,” explains Phil Upshall, Executive Director, Mood Disorders Society of Canada. “It’s important to help Canadians understand that recovery from mental illness is possible.”

The survey, conducted by Angus Reid Strategies, found that depression is reported to personally impact many Canadians. When asked about how many individuals they know that have been diagnosed with depression by a health professional, 46 per cent have a family member; 52 per cent have a friend or colleague; while 28 per cent report that they themselves have been diagnosed at one time.

The World Health Organization estimates that by 2020, depression will be the world’s second leading cause of disability, behind heart disease.

### **Canadians need help identifying certain depression symptoms**

Top of mind, Canadians most commonly associate social withdrawal (40 per cent), sleep problems (37 per cent), loss of interest (18 per cent), fatigue (29 per cent) and sadness (26 per cent) with depression. In contrast, excessive crying, trouble concentrating, suicide, insomnia, or muscle aches/pain are much less likely to be top of mind:

<b>Common symptoms of depression</b>	<b>Percentage of Canadians with top-of-mind awareness</b>
<b><i>EMOTIONAL</i></b>	
Loss of interest	18%
Contemplation of suicide	16%
Excessive crying	10%
Self-loathing	1%
<b><i>PHYSICAL</i></b>	
Insomnia	14%
Trouble concentrating	10%
Muscle aches and pain	2%

*Note: Not a complete list of depression symptoms*

When asked to identify symptoms from a list, knowledge for some symptoms was high. For example, most Canadians identified loss of interest in daily activities (97 per cent), excessive crying (91 per cent) and self-loathing (89 per cent) with depression. Yet recognition of a broader range of depression symptoms, particularly muscle aches and pain (36 per cent) and back aches (24 per cent) was much lower, even when prompted.

“The ability to more readily recognize the broad range of depression symptoms in a loved one and oneself is very important,” explains Upshall. “Recent medical studies suggest that those successfully treated for all their depressive symptoms may be more likely to achieve remission, compared with those who face lingering symptoms.” He further points out that appropriate treatment such as talk therapy, self-help, medication and peer support groups offer a greater chance for recovery and improved quality of life.

### **Seeking help for depression**

According to the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, despite the fact that many Canadians believe those with depression should talk about it openly, many still won't.

“People with depression often won't reach out for help because they worry about being labeled, or told to 'get over it.' For example, more than a quarter (26 per cent) of Canadians think people can stop being depressed if they really try. Fear of discrimination must change, or we'll never turn the corner on this serious and pervasive illness,” explains Upshall.

For those who suspect that they or a loved one is experiencing depression symptoms, Mood Disorders Society of Canada recommends the following steps:

- Talk to a loved one or friend to share your concern for yourself or them;
- See a healthcare professional (doctor, social worker, psychologist, etc.);
- Look for community peer and self-help support programs and;
- If you are prescribed medication, give it a chance to take effect (sometimes up to six weeks) and don't stop taking it without consulting your prescribing health care professional.

### **About Mood Disorders Society of Canada**

The Mood Disorders Society is a national, not-for-profit, charitable organization. It is a voice for Canadian patients and their families and caregivers on mental health issues such as depression and bipolar disorder. Its website – [www.mooddorderscanada.ca](http://www.mooddorderscanada.ca) - provides resources and support on depression and other types of mood disorders. The Mood Disorders Society of Canada appreciates the support of Eli Lilly Canada Inc. and Boehringer Ingelheim (Canada) Ltd., through an unconditional grant, for its public education program during Mental Health Week in Canada, May 5-11, 2008.

### **About Mental Health Week**

Mental Health Week in Canada is held in early May, this year it is May 5-11, 2008, and is part of the worldwide Mental Health Week activities designed to raise awareness of the importance of mental health for all Canadians.

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#### **Reference:**

<sup>1</sup> From March 31 to April 2, 2008, Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,005 randomly selected Angus Reid panelists. The sample is demographically and geographically representative of Adult Canadian population. The margin of error, which measures sampling variability, is +/- 3.1 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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