



Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre

# BRAIN WAVE

The Magazine Of The Epilepsy Program

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## Stephen Hives' Epilepsy Proclamation

(Given at Sidney City Hall on March 23, 2015)

My name is Stephen Hives. This evening I have the honour to speak on behalf of HeadWay, Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre – A Society very dear to my heart. I have had epilepsy, and my mother developed early onset Parkinson's at age 32.

I was involved in the early stages of the formation of the Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre Society. It was founded in 1986 from the BC Epilepsy Society and Parkinson's Society with both of their provincial headquarters in Vancouver. A small office was opened in Victoria with one staff member and volunteers. The requests for advice and information were overwhelming.

In 1982 the Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre Society was established under the Societies Act. From the active membership a board of directors was elected and so began the Society we now proudly call HeadWay, the Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre. What is HeadWay? ....It is a Society to enhance the lives of those in the Capital Regional District living with epilepsy or Parkinson's and is the area's centre for information, support and education services. So! What is epilepsy? ... It is a physical condition of the brain, diagnosed when a person has two or more unprovoked seizures. There is a spectrum of different types of seizures and no two peoples' seizures will be alike!! HeadWay strives to empower people living with epilepsy, to lead active lives fully participating in society.

(Continued on p. 2)

# Stephen Hives Proclamation (Cont'd)

The Centre holds knowledge about epilepsy and seizures and has access to the latest information and research; subsequently helping people cope with the effects of this neurological disorder.

HeadWay, the Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre is there when people with epilepsy need them most; providing answers, connecting people with needed resources, and creating a compassionate community for those they serve.

## Here are a few facts about epilepsy:

- It is common;
- It affects 300,000 in Canada and 50 million worldwide;
- Approximately 1 in 100 people have epilepsy, meaning 3500 people in the Greater Victoria Area;
- Everyday 1 in 38 people learn they have epilepsy; and
- One in 10 people will have a seizure in their lifetime.
- Epilepsy affects all ages and can begin at any age.
- Children are the largest group experiencing seizures. They are more susceptible having a low threshold for seizures because of their developing brains. Their seizures may only be experienced at certain stages of their childhood or youth, and may outgrow them.
- The second largest group are seniors; 1 in 14 seniors will experience seizures and be diagnosed with epilepsy.



I would like to speak for a few moments about Purple Day which is now recognized internationally each year on March 26th. It is dedicated to raising awareness about epilepsy and was founded in 2008 by 9-year-old Cassidy Megan of Nova Scotia. She came up with the idea of Purple Day when many people could wear purple to show support for those living with epilepsy every day.

It is vital that we increase understanding about epilepsy:

- It is NOT contagious; stigma, discrimination and myths still surround epilepsy
- Never put something in the mouth of an individual experiencing a seizure because you fear he or she might swallow their tongue. It is impossible to actually swallow your tongue. Please just help them lie on their side and keep them from hurting themselves.

The Centre staff and volunteers work to dispel stigma by teaching our communities to identify different types of seizures and learn to respond to both seizures and the people experiencing them in the best way. Remember that people with epilepsy have the same capacity to learn, play and work as those living without epilepsy.

In conclusion, my sincere thanks for the opportunity to tell you about epilepsy and I hope this will give you an understanding and appreciation of this disorder. Thank you all.

# Purple Day 2015

Another successful Epilepsy Awareness Campaign this year thanks to our many volunteers!

The Bunny Hop was a great success again this year! For those of you not familiar, we invite preschools and Daycares in the CRD to participate by hopping for epilepsy awareness! How fun, not to mention cute! 9 preschools and daycares participated with a total of 153 children! 3 of them (Castle Care Daycare, Atkins Child Care, Buddy Bears Child Care) made it into a fundraiser, raising \$412.00! Thank you so much! Thank you as well to the other daycares and preschools that participated: KD's Family Playcare, My House Daycare, Parachute Express Playschool, Precious Moments Daycare, Queenswood Family Childcare, and The Play House. 153 children in total participated.

Ripple Takhar, a Sprott Shaw Community College student approached HeadWay for a school project initially and after learning about the important work we do, wanted to help out! How lovely! The timing was great for us as Purple Day was on the horizon and intrigued Ripple. She had an information table and helped raise an astonishing \$167.85 on Purple Day outside of the college on busy Douglas Street. Great job, Ripple! Ripple will be joining other volunteers at the Kite Festival May 30 & 31 weekend giving out seizure first aid cards and hosting an information table at Clover Point – stop by and give her a congratulatory high 5! We are still looking for more volunteers for the Kite Festival - see page 8.

**Legislative visit (L-R):** Sonya Dhudwal, Tessa Hawkins (& Kash), Terri-Lynne Beaton, Honorable Terry Lake (Minister of Health), and Ron Truswell attended the Legislative Assemblies Question Period on March 26th to listen to a statement made on Purple Day and Epilepsy Awareness. We also had the opportunity to meet briefly with Health Minister, Hon. Terry Lake for a photo.



Staff through The Ministry of Justice generously donated \$265.00 in the month of March with the help of Jessica Derkatch, a Ministry of Justice employee and HeadWay member. Thank you to everyone there for helping support our charity!

Thank you to Melissa Ferguson for helping spread epilepsy awareness throughout 3 of our Greater Victoria Public Libraries, including Saanich Centennial Library, the Central Branch, and Nellie McClung. Staff at the Saanich

Centennial branch donned their aprons and baked delicious goodies for a bake sale, raising \$150.00 that they donated to HeadWay.

The idea for JoAnne Lefler's Did you know? project came to her when she was a patient on the neurology ward awaiting surgery for her seizures. The project depicts renowned historical figures who were talented in four different genres including music composers, artists, scientists/mathematicians, and poets/authors. Knowing that they had seizures provided her with great inspiration and hope. She thought to herself that other patients and students would likely benefit from this knowledge and the project was born! The project has been presented to some middle and elementary schools in the greater Victoria area thus far. If you know of any schools that may be interested, please contact our office (continued on p. 4).



Gord Robbins: “Owen’s class participation was probably 90%! I can say that those who wore purple did an admirable job of really doing it right. One young girl had purple from her shoes to her hair band... and various shades everywhere in between! The teacher participated with his own purple shirt, and had already drafted the morning math lesson on the board in purple marker, so kudos to him for both remembering and participating. Owen was thrilled to have a bit of a spotlight on him with his “Purple Swag Bag” at the ready. He made sure all of his classmates had wrist bands, pencils, stickers etc and they were equally thrilled to receive them. The teacher and TA were not left out of course, so everyone had something to sport and remember the day by. The 5 pins were left to Owen to distribute. He elected to ‘reward’ those who wore the most purple, or those whom he simply felt worthy (not saying girlfriend, but perhaps...?). That evening I asked Owen if he had an opportunity to discuss Epilepsy at school. While I did not ask him in advance to do so, nor did his mother, he said “Yes, I told my class that Epilepsy is when you have seizures. And my brother has seizures...sometimes he has a lot”. So there you have it. The young ones can do so much with so little thought; the rest of us would do well to learn from them.”

Political: All 13 CRD jurisdictions were contacted asking if they would be willing to proclaim Purple Day. 6 agreed (City of Victoria, District of Central Saanich, City of Colwood, Oak Bay, Highlands, Town of Sidney), 7 did not (Esquimalt, Langford, Metchosin, North Saanich, Saanich, and Sooke). Former agency President, Steven Hives was approached by HeadWay staff to see if he would agree to speak at the City of Victoria Council. He kindly agreed, but his speech was far down on the agenda for the lengthy meeting. He instead gave his speech at the the Town of Sidney meeting and provided Council members with epilepsy awareness bracelets.



Oh La La Cupcakes owner and staff member

It was great to see everyone who came out to our Epilepsy 101 talk at the University of Victoria on Purple Day. A big thank you to Shannon Firman, Tessa Hawkins, and Juan Palacio for opening up and sharing their own experiences living with epilepsy. It opened the doors to a truly rich and honest discussion.



Gorgeous purple display at WIN

A big thank you to the supporters in our community that helped spread epilepsy awareness on Purple Day. Thank you to Oh La La Cupcakes for selling purple cupcakes on Purple Day and donating 50% of the funds to HeadWay epilepsy programs and services. If you haven’t tried an Oh La La Cupcake before, you need to get in there! Thank you to Verve Consignment and WIN for putting on eye-catching purple storefronts.



Epilepsy 101 Talk at UVIC



Creative purple display at Verve

And thank you to all of those who helped raise awareness throughout greater Victoria with Purple Day materials! With every pamphlet, leaflet, button, pen and bracelet we are increasing understanding, reducing stigma and improving the quality of life for those living with epilepsy.

Farewell, everyone! It has been a true pleasure working with and for all of you over the span of the last year. Please note that Jennifer Morgan is back as of May 4th.

Until next time,  
Sonya Dhudwal MSW, RSW



L to R: Ms. Spahan's Kindergarten class at McCauley Elementary, Sonya&Amanda, Purple Day set-up at Centennial Library's epilepsy awareness bake sale.



L to R: Kira Harris spreading epilepsy awareness at the Chamber of Commerce meet-up, Staff at VIHA Centennial Library baked goods, Puppet Troupe supporting Purple Day



L to R: Staff at Centennial Library, Teresa Middleton, Annemarie Middleton, Sonya & Terri Beaton.



L to R: Staff at Queen Alexandra (QA), QA Staff with Dr. Chand Taneja, Staff at DesignHouse Salon, Staff at VIHA - all wearing their purple gear in support of epilepsy awareness!

# What's Happening at Headway

To register or learn more about any of the programs listed here, contact Jennifer Morgan at (250) 475-6677 or e-mail [jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca](mailto:jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca)

## Workshops

### **Session: The Child with Epilepsy: A Practical Guide for Parents**

**Date:** Saturday, May 23, 2015 **Cost:** \$10.00 (subsidies are available) **Time:** 10AM-3PM

**Description:** Parenting is an exciting and challenging chapter in life. Having a child with a chronic health condition brings additional challenges. It can feel like you're navigating an impossible maze- from finding the best treatment option to keeping your child safe to optimizing school experiences. The workshop is intended for parents of children with seizures. If you're a parent of a newly diagnosed child, you are likely not sure where to go next. Even if you're a parent of a child who has had seizures for a number of years, you may still have questions about how to best support your child. This workshop will inform, inspire and prepare you to explore options, ask questions, share ideas and learn about resources available here in Victoria.

## Support Groups

To register or learn more about any of the programs listed here, contact Jennifer Morgan at (250) 475-6677 or e-mail [jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca](mailto:jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca)

**All seizures types are welcome!** A HeadWay member recently approached us to inquire if the support groups were exclusively meant for individuals who experience tonic-clonic seizures. We clarified that the group is open to everyone who experiences any type of seizures, whether newly diagnosed or has had epilepsy since childhood, whether they are experiencing active seizures or are seizure-free. Everyone is welcome and everyone can use some support every once in a while. The only stipulation is that clients meet with the Epilepsy Program Coordinator in order to be referred to the group. Issues discussed range from medications, to lifestyle, to relationships, to sleep, to employment, to stigma, to driving, to you name it!

### **Supporting Adults with Epilepsy**

*Referral is necessary by the Epilepsy Program Coordinator in order to attend.*

**Date:** 3rd Tuesday of every month **Time:** 2PM-3:30PM **Location:** Headway Boardroom

**Description:** This group is available to anyone with epilepsy who feels as though they would benefit from some peer support. Whether you have had epilepsy since you were a child or are newly diagnosed, sharing your story and hearing from others can have a significantly positive impact on your life and on the lives of those you touch. Even if you are presently seizure-free or if you are having active seizures, it does not matter. This group provides a safe space for individuals to discuss epilepsy-related issues, such as medications, relationships, sleep, and lifestyle. One to one support is also available and can be coordinated through the Centre, however, adults with epilepsy are invited to be a part of this specialized support group that provides the unique opportunity to connect with other adults living with epilepsy, learn more about epilepsy, and share your feelings and concerns in a warm and supportive environment.

## Young Adults with Epilepsy

*Referral is necessary by the Epilepsy Program Coordinator in order to attend.*

**Date:** 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month **Time:** 6:00pm-7:30pm **Location:** Check on the Facebook group

**Description:** Whether you've had epilepsy all your life or started having seizures in adolescence, issues rise up whenever your life changes- and changes are bountiful in young adulthood! Come out and meet other young adults who have epilepsy. Talk about anything from school and jobs to relationships and medication management. Contact the Epilepsy Program Coordinator to be added to the Facebook page that will keep you in the loop.

## Epilepsy Advisory Committee

**Date:** May 2015 **Time:** To be confirmed. **Location:** Headway Boardroom

**Description:** The Epilepsy Advisory Committee meets four times per year to help plan the epilepsy services which best reflect the needs and interests of our members. We believe that it is people such as you, who understand the day-to-day experience of epilepsy, who can help us ensure that our services are on track. Contact Barb at [bgilmore@vepc.bc.ca](mailto:bgilmore@vepc.bc.ca) if interested in joining.

## Peer Support

**Description:** Want to meet with others who are touched by epilepsy but prefer a one-on-one setting? Sign up to provide peer support and share your experience and knowledge.

## Moms/Future Moms

Stay tuned on news of this upcoming peer led support group. Contact Jenn ([jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca](mailto:jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca)) if you're interested in joining.

## Tools For Success

*To register or learn more about any of the programs listed here, contact Jennifer Morgan at (250) 475-6677 or e-mail [jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca](mailto:jmorgan@vepc.bc.ca)*

**Date:** Wednesdays **Time:** 4:30pm-6:00pm **Location:** University of Victoria, CORE Space

**Months:** Sept-April **Description:** The tutors in the **Tools For Success** program will help you:



- Identify learning challenges
- Build on strengths
- Develop learning strategies that are personal and effective

Tutors work with children in small groups and yet the program is highly individualized. Weekly tutoring sessions involve a variety of approaches, and interactions, so that learning is a fun experience. Subsidies available.

**We need a couple more tutors for September.  
Do you know any teachers who might be interested?**

# Get It? Got It! Puppet Troupe



L to R: Sonya, Hannah (puppet with epilepsy), Jay (puppeteer hiding behind Hannah, Cam (puppeteer), Aisha, Amanda at Torquay Elementary School March 6th, 2015.

Sonya and Amanda had the opportunity to watch a performance firsthand and loved every minute! Visit the "Get it? Got it." Facebook page to book a performance today! Or contact Shannon at [puppeteer.coordinator@gmail.com](mailto:puppeteer.coordinator@gmail.com)

## Did You Know?



The idea for JoAnne Lefler's Did you know? project came to her when she was a patient on the neurology ward awaiting surgery for her seizures. The project depicts renowned historical figures who were talented in four different genres including composers, artists, scientists/mathematicians, and poets/authors. Knowing that they had seizures provided her with great inspiration and hope. She thought to herself that other patients and students would likely benefit from this knowledge and the project was born! The project has been presented to some middle and elementary schools in the greater Victoria area thus far. If you know of any schools that may be interested, please contact our office at 250-475-6677.

## Volunteers, We need you!



We are still looking for interested volunteers to help out at the Kite Festival, May 30&31. Last year we had a table set up at the Clover Point location to answer any questions surrounding HeadWay services and to give spectators passing by seizure first aid cards. The Kite Festival is pleased to welcome kite flyer Connor Doran again this year. He will be at the opening ceremony on Friday, May 29th, at noon, at the Bay Centre's lower level centre court to speak and fly indoors on behalf of Headway, Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre.



We are still looking for individuals to volunteer or participate at this year's golf tournament on June 12 2015. If interested, please contact Monica at 250-217-0772.

# Embrace Medical Quality Smartwatch

The Embrace is the first medical-quality smartwatch that helps predict [seizures caused by epilepsy], and measures stress, activity and sleep. Designed to improve the lives of people living with epilepsy, the sleek-looking device can also be worn purely as a stylish watch.

[Epilepsy is common]. Approximately 65 million people worldwide [have epilepsy]. The Embrace wearable works in conjunction with the wearer's smartphone to monitor physiological stress, sleep and physical activity and alerts people with epilepsy when an unusual event like a convulsive seizure happens. One of the benefits of today's smart technology is the ability to also alert other people when a loved one experiences a health issue, or forgets to take their medication.... The Embrace can send an alert to nominated family members or friends via the system's Empatica Alert iOS/Android app, who can then bring help.

Family, friends or caregivers can also wear a "companion" Embrace. When the two Embraces are within range, the companion device will vibrate to alert them that another wearer may need assistance. Embrace will also launch with the Empatica Mate app which can be used by anyone to track stress, sleep quality and physical activity. For example, you can set the Embrace to vibrate gently when your stress level starts rising, giving you the opportunity to take action before it gets too high, or when you reach activity targets during the day or during your workout.

If you push yourself too hard, the Embrace will gently remind you with a vibration that you need some time to recover. You can also track changes in your stress levels during different daily activities, like commuting by car versus bike, meeting with your boss or a friend, and taking exercise, giving you customized insights into your behavior.

Embrace measures movement and physiological signals to detect potential life-threatening seizures via a range of sensors that gauge electrodermal activity (EDA) or skin conductance (arousal, excitement), movement or activity (accelerometers) and activity (temperature). The sensors and algorithms were originally developed at the MIT Media Lab where researchers discovered that combining stress data from the wrist with activity data led to the most accurate seizure detection. EDA is activated by areas of the brain involved in emotions such as fear, anxiety, and excitement, and is strongly activated during the kinds of seizures that can shut down breathing. These emotions generate skin conductance which varies depending on the amount of sweat-induced moisture on the skin.

Although the algorithm has currently only been validated for convulsive seizure detection, research is being conducted into the detection of nonconvulsive seizures. Empatica notes that as biofeedback using skin conductance can cut seizure frequency almost in half for many people, the Embrace may be able to help those with complex partial or other nonconvulsive seizures. The sleep and stress pattern data collected by the Embrace may also help people with epilepsy work out whether changing these patterns reduce seizure frequency.

Article excerpted from: <http://www.gizmag.com/embrace-smartwatch-epilepsy-seizure-detection/35037/>

# Hannah's Story

By Hannah Ryan

We asked Hannah to write her story because it is unfortunately typical of how seizures suddenly affect someone's life at age 30 and how HeadWay is able to assist. Below is a shortened version of her story. If you would like to read the whole thing, or if your story is similar and you need support from HeadWay, please contact us.

My first seizure came at night while I was asleep. I had all the tests and everything was 'inconclusive'. The question was there, should I take medication or just hope it was a fluke. The neurologist had told us that if I were to have another seizure my license would be revoked. I was still in denial I'd even had a seizure, no history in my family, I don't do drugs and I thought I was overall quite healthy! There simply seemed, in my mind no reason I should've had the first one, let alone another...

It came as I was getting ready to go to work (15 minutes later and I would have been driving on the highway at 90km/hr). My partner took me to hospital and before I'd even been attended to, the emergency doctor came strutting over telling me that she had called the department of motor vehicles and my license would be revoked.

There are no public buses that go by my house and if I wanted to go to the grocery store, I'd have to catch a taxi. I can walk to a gas station but you can't live on gas station food, or at least I don't recommend it!

Finally, 3.5 months later I received a letter saying I wasn't allowed to drive and that I had to get the medical forms that were attached filled out by my doctor and sent in before 30 days. I did what they asked, but my interaction with the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles was very disappointing. Whilst the majority of their employees were courteous with me, I was given conflicting information each time I called. They lost copies of my neurologist reports and they made me get new copies. But guess what, you can't get a new neurologist report until you go see the neurologist again. Getting in to see the neurologist can be quite difficult; sometimes it takes months just to get in the door.

When I asked the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles if I would go back to the end of the queue, she said she couldn't guarantee anything. They say "Up to 90 days" but that's just a joke. I called a lawyer who said that I did have a case. Meanwhile, I began to feel depressed, trapped. I couldn't go see friends, I couldn't go get groceries, I couldn't even get to work without relying on everyone else which, when you're independent, is incredibly humiliating.

The assistance that I received from Headway has been absolutely invaluable to my family and for me. They gave me information about my seizures, license, medication and referred me to a neurologist. And finally....the number for the ombudsperson and this is my recommendation to anyone going through this issue!! I spoke to a wonderful lady who waited patiently while I told her my long, long story. She was appalled at how ridiculous the Superintendent was being. The loss of documents, issues not being addressed, different information each time I called and spoke with a different person. She said I definitely had a case and that she would start a file for me right away. With their help and my own effort I finally had my license back. I'd been seizure free for 6 months at the very beginning of August 2014 and I didn't get my license back until the middle of November.

Whilst I understand the 'safety' issues surrounding revoking licenses I wonder, how many other people like me will not go back to the hospital for treatment for fear of having to go through all of this again?? I think emergency doctors should consult with those who specialize in this field before making such life-altering decisions.

## Rash Risk

There are some anti-epileptic drugs that note rash as a potential side-effect and it is common for patients to experience a mild form of a rash as a result of the medication. This medication side-effect frequently subsides after the drug is discontinued. Recently, however, perampanel (Fycompa®) has been added to the list of anti-epileptic drugs that may cause a life-threatening rash following a 13 year old girl presenting with a rash, fever, and cough 5 weeks after starting the drug. Other drugs that could result in serious skin rashes include clobazam and ezogabine.

Keep in mind that you will not know that a drug will result in a life-threatening rash upon its initial presentation. But, here are some signs of systemic illness to look out for and can be used to determine any serious drug reaction: fever, enlargement of lymph nodes, malaise, liver, kidney or blood abnormalities.

**Source:** Medscape Date December 17, 2014 (Author: Andrew N. Wilner, MD Title: Perampanel-Induced Rash Noted in Young Epilepsy Patient).



## Update: Decision made for Dogs on Buses

The Regional Transit Commission Meeting took place on February 18, 2015 and a decision was reached in regards to whether or not dogs not in carriers should be allowed on buses. The commission decided that at this time, the policy will remain unchanged, a decision that we support.



## Thank you to our incredible volunteers!

Volunteer Appreciation Week was April 12-18, 2015 and we could not be more thankful for our incredible volunteers. We would not be where we are today without you!

# Canadian Epilepsy Alliance Welcomes Drug Shortage Announcement

Vancouver, February 10th 2015- Canadian Epilepsy Alliance members joined Federal Health Minister Rona Ambrose today as the Minister announced that Canadian pharmaceutical manufacturers will now be required to provide notice of shortages of their drugs. Currently the drug shortage notification is voluntary.

“This is a major step forward for people living with epilepsy, and other diseases and disorders who require ongoing access to their medications,” said Deirdre Floyd, President of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance. “It’s terrifying when someone living with seizures goes to the pharmacy to refill their prescription only to find out there is a shortage. It has happened too often in recent years to too many people who can’t miss their medication, and hopefully this will help to address shortages in the future.”

“On behalf of the 300,000 people across Canada living with epilepsy, I want to thank Minister Ambrose for implementing this change to the Federal health regulations. I also wish to thank the Members of Parliament, from every party, who have supported past efforts to ensure the safety of people who require ongoing medications.”

“Today’s announcement won’t end drug shortages,” continued Floyd. “That will require further efforts on the part of government and industry to react when a shortage is anticipated. What today’s announcement does mean is that individuals and families have a real opportunity to prepare in times of anticipated crisis.”

Minister Ambrose’s announcement comes after years of work on the part of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance and other organizations, raising the issue of drug shortages with Federal regulators and Parliamentarians. The voluntary notification system, where manufacturers may provide information on an industry administered website, has often seen shortages not reported until patients discover the shortage on their own. This is especially dangerous for individuals living with epilepsy where an interruption in their medication can result in serious adverse effects or even death. It is hoped that with mandatory notification, individuals can work with their physicians and pharmacists to ensure an adequate supply of the medication they require.

Nathalie Jette, President of the Canadian League Against Epilepsy, was also encouraged by the announcement and congratulated members of the Canadian Epilepsy Alliance for their efforts in bringing this important healthcare issue to government. “Mandatory reporting of drug shortages is critical for those with epilepsy as it is unsafe to stop antiseizure medications abruptly. This new policy will enhance the likelihood of ongoing safe care for those with epilepsy who already have to deal with so much uncertainty related to their conditions.” Said Floyd, “This is an important decision for Canada’s epilepsy community.”

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Canadian Epilepsy Alliance

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# The Effects of Exercise on the Brain

By Terri-Lynne Beaton



Almost everyone knows that exercise helps with many health issues, such as heart disease, weight loss, diabetes and many other diseases. Did you know that exercise can actually change your brain chemistry?

Here is my story: In 2010, I went to an Epilepsy conference in Victoria, BC. The main speaker was Brian Christie, from the University of Victoria, and his topic was exercise and the brain. I knew that exercise helped many diseases such as heart, lung, diabetes, and depression. I did not know that physical exercise could actually regenerate cell growth in the brain. This really excited me as I have memory problems. I decided to start an exercise program twice a week.

I lost over fifty pounds and gained heart health. Wow, what a side effect! After a year, I was able to go to night school. It was hard, but I was able to grasp concepts and pay attention to the instructor. I managed to graduate in 2012. I have done further research to see what actually happens when we exercise and what Dr. Christie has found about how “exercise can stimulate new adult brain cells or neurons.” Dr. Christie was one of the first to discover that physical exercise can stimulate the growth of brain cells in the hippocampus. This is important because the hippocampus is the area responsible for memory and learning.

One of first clues about exercise-induced changes in the brain came when a group of scientists decided to give mice unlimited access to an exercise wheel. They compared these rats with a group that did not have access to an exercise wheel. In the rats that exercised, they found that the number of new nerve cells in the hippocampus doubled. Later when the scientists taught the rats to navigate the water maze, the runners learned faster and took a more direct route.

One study found that “Brain cells can improve intellect only if they join the existing neural network. One way to pull neurons into the network is to learn something.” Exercise plays a role in improving this and, although “How exercise remakes minds on a molecular level is not yet fully understood... research suggests that exercise prompts something called brain-derived neurotropic factor, or B.D.N.F.” Scientists can measure B.D.N.F. levels in the blood.

I am glad to find out that physical exercise can stimulate regrowth of neurons. Even though I do not fully understand the science of brain cell regrowth, I am sure glad that scientists have studied this area. I feel I have benefitted from this knowledge.

**See what you can learn at this year’s Epilepsy Conference taking place in November. Open to the general public and epilepsy professionals.**

## Sources:

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<http://www.brainfacts.org/across-the-lifespan/diet-and-exercise/articles/2013/physical-exercise-beefs-up-the-brain/>

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/magazine/howhow-exercise-could-lead-to-a-better-brain.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/magazine/howhow-exercise-could-lead-to-a-better-brain.html?_r=1)



## From the Executive Director

Spring ...open the doors and welcome. Welcome to spring 2015! And welcome back to Jenn Morgan on May 4th after her maternity leave. Sonya Dhudwal has been a wonderful member of the HeadWay team and will be very much missed by clients, staff and volunteers. We wish her well and sincerely hope our paths cross someday soon. Jenn will be resuming the position of epilepsy program coordinator and is keen to see everyone again.

Welcome a 16% Epilepsy Membership Growth in a year! 319 in May 2014 and 371 almost a year later.

Welcome & Thank you to all of the new people that connected with us during March epilepsy awareness month. What an awesome month we shared, with dozens of people learning about seizures, epilepsy and what HeadWay is all about. It is difficult to measure the community's connection to us after everyone's fundraising and awareness activities, but when it comes to dollars, you raised over \$1700 for HeadWay. Hooray and Thank you, Thank you, Thank you!!

Welcome to a new board member in January; Katy Fairley, from here in Victoria. She is currently the business development manager at Kinetic Construction with a BA from Mount Allison University 2005 in International Relations. She is interested in public speaking, public relations, fundraising and communications and is also serving as a director on the Vancouver Island Construction Association (2014-17) and is the Chair of Women in Construction (2013-ongoing). Her interest, passion and experience are with epilepsy. Welcome Katy! The Society's board of directors expects to bring additional members to this leadership role over the next few months. Please contact me about details (contact info listed below).

Welcome to old & new members on the Epilepsy Advisory Committee. Leadership for the Society and the Centre's programs come from not only the Board of Directors and executive director, but importantly from Advisory Committees for either Parkinson's or epilepsy. The Epilepsy Advisory Committee meets at least 4 times annually and represents the membership concerning the activities of the Centre. The members are representative of various groups and geographical areas and are liaisons between their needs and priorities for program planning at the Centre. Thanks so much to past, present and future volunteers; especially Terri Beaton and Dan Marple for long time and consistent participation on the Epilepsy Advisory Committee. Are you interested in being a new Advisory Committee member? If so, contact me at the information listed below.

Welcome to Lynn Fanelli who is joining our staff team this year as a fund development coordinator. Read more about her on page 15.

Finally, we Welcome you to join us for our Annual General Meeting being planned for Tuesday June 30th 3- 5pm. Typically the annual general meeting for the Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre Society is held the last week of June to review the fiscal audit of the year just ended and reports of the Centre's programs and activities. Members are invited to attend and vote, interact and meet our staff and volunteers. Call to register your attendance (number listed below).

**Barb Gilmore**

Email: [bgilmore@vepc.bc.ca](mailto:bgilmore@vepc.bc.ca) Phone: 250-475-6677



## From the Fund Development Coordinator

As a new member to the Headway team, I bring with me 20 years of fundraising experience. My goal over the next year is to tell our stories. Outline how “It’s my life to live” and what impact living with epilepsy or Parkinson’s has on our daily life.

By engaging our community and telling our stories, we can build supporters for Headway. The goal is to make the Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson’s Centre everyone’s “Charity of Choice”.

## “Charity of Choice”

Get involved this year! You, your business and your family have an opportunity to participate in the Headway Charity Golf Classic June 12, 2015 at Olympic View Golf Course, become a business partner by purchasing an ad in this newsletter, donate to Headway through your payroll donation program, or run the GoodLife Fitness Victoria Marathon October 11, 2015. My two teenage daughters will be running 8 km for their Dad. He was diagnosed with Parkinson’s six years ago.

I look forward to working with you over the next year.

## Does Your Workplace Support a Local Charity?

Many companies focus their charitable support around employee areas of interest. We encourage you to tell your workplace about Headway, Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson’s Centre. As you may know, the Centre provides individuals, families and your community with the support and knowledge needed to live well with seizures, epilepsy or Parkinson’s.



A payroll deduction program is a convenient way to contribute to the Centre. As an employee, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly deductions provide you a convenient way to give to your community; as well as provide a year-end charitable tax receipt.

Contact us and we can provide you with additional information, or go directly to your company’s administration and have Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson’s Centre Society added to the list of qualified charities who receive payroll donations.

## **Advertising Guidelines**

Acceptance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement by the Victoria Epilepsy & Parkinson's Centre of the products or services listed.

Distribution: 800 Victoria & Vancouver Island

Seasonal Issues: Fall, Winter, Spring/Summer

For ad rates, format, deadlines and payment options please contact Della Truitt, VEPC Office Manager, at (250) 475-6677 or email: [help@vepc.bc.ca](mailto:help@vepc.bc.ca)

## **Confidentiality Guidelines**

We respect your right to privacy, so please be assured that our agency does not share our membership list with outside individuals or organizations. Occasionally we may ask you to volunteer some information so that we can better understand our clients' needs and improve our services.

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Please Note:

Our website is now [www.headwayvictoria.com](http://www.headwayvictoria.com) but redirected to [www.vepc.bc.ca](http://www.vepc.bc.ca). We remain the **Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre** (not VEPC and not Headway) for any cheque payments.

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