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Huntington Society Celebrates Huntington Disease Awareness Month

(Kitchener, ON) April 23, 2015 – May is Huntington Disease (HD) Awareness Month and the Huntington Society is spreading the word, educating Canadians about the disease and how they can help the over 30,000 Canadians affected.

This year, May Awareness comes on the heels of the newly released novel by award-winning, New York Times bestselling author and neuroscientist, Lisa Genova, *Inside the O'Briens*. Released on April 7, 2015, it is a poignant portrayal of the devastating impact of HD on Joe O'Brien, a 44-year-old police officer from the Irish Catholic neighbourhood of Charlestown, Massachusetts. A devoted husband, proud father of four children in their twenties, and respected officer, Joe begins experiencing bouts of disorganized thinking, uncharacteristic temper outbursts, and strange, involuntary movements. He initially attributes these episodes to the stress of his job, but as these symptoms worsen, he agrees to see a neurologist and is handed a diagnosis that will change his and his family's lives forever: Huntington disease.

The novel is a good way to gain a better understanding of the impact of HD on generations of families. The Huntington Society of Canada is truly grateful to Genova for raising awareness of HD in Canada and across North America.

The Society's PSA Campaign "*Do You Really Want To Know?*" highlights the impact of Huntington disease and speaks to the critical issue of genetic discrimination, which affects all Canadians. "*Do You Really Want to Know?*" exposes the reality of genetic discrimination in Canada. To download the "*Do You Really Want to Know?*" newspaper ads, radio ads, and view the commercials or brochure, please visit the Society's Media Centre [HERE](#).

Anyone could have sequences in their DNA that can lead to diseases like Huntington's, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes and vision loss. Today, there are over 3,000 genetic tests available to Canadians but being tested may put the individual at-risk for genetic discrimination. Canada is the only G7 country that does not protect its citizens against this form of discrimination.

"Our practices in business, commerce and in the home must keep pace so people are protected from incomplete information and inappropriate usage," says Bev Heim-Myers, Chief Executive Officer of the Huntington Society of Canada. "Who among us has perfect genes?" she points out. "Everyone could be at-risk."

This is why the Huntington Society of Canada is leading the charge when it comes to genetic fairness in Canada. May is Huntington Disease Awareness Month and the Society wants to educate Canadians because genetic discrimination is a reality in Canada.

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Huntington disease has devastating effects on both body and mind. It is like having the symptoms of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and schizophrenia all in one disease. Symptoms usually begin between the ages of 30 and 50 and often include uncontrollable jerking movements and cognitive impairment. They gradually worsen over the 10-25 year course of the disease, eventually leading to total incapacitation and death. Children of a parent with HD have a 50% chance of inheriting the disease.

The Huntington Society of Canada (HSC) is a respected leader in the worldwide effort to end Huntington disease. HSC is the only Canadian health charity dedicated to providing help and hope for families dealing with Huntington disease across Canada. The Huntington Society of Canada aspires to a world free from Huntington disease.

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