

## National FM & CFS Awareness Day

May 12<sup>th</sup>: *Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Awareness Day*

(Ottawa, Ontario, Canada – Wednesday 12 May 2004) More than one million Canadians will suffer from Fibromyalgia (FM) and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), aka Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.) for the rest of their lives. Today, Mayors across Canada are joining with hundreds world-wide to recognise the substantial communities they serve who have these terrible illnesses. This internationally recognised Awareness Day has been a rallying point for the millions who personally experience the illnesses.

In Canada, local Self-Help and regional groups have laboured for years to develop a movement, but their ill health limited their ability, and their efforts were largely separate. But this year the many groups are working together with growing numbers of healthy people and community leaders, developing free educational resources for physicians and patients, preparing submissions to government, and encouraging research.

It's a story to watch, as a new national health cause develops from nearly nothing, to serve more than a million afflicted people and the needs of their families, representing about 10% of Canada's population.

### How to Avoid FM & CFS

The highest goal of the community is to find the cure, but even finding an effective treatment would be a good step. For the rest of the population, finding out what causes this illness should be a major issue, as no one knows. How can we advise other Canadians to avoid our fate? Are there preventive measures one can take? This is why patient participation in the free, online, Patient Registry is the key objective of the movement – to help researchers find the participants for their studies, to find answers to these important questions. If you're healthy and you know someone with FM or CFS, encourage them to register – they may be keeping your healthy and safe.

### National Rally Centre:

Visit the central FM-CFS.ca web site for a front page list of the groups, more than 100 free educational materials, self-help groups, research, and the Patient Registry to which all patients are being asked to join to help researchers.

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### For more information:

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### FM & CFS Facts:

**Population size:** More than 1 million Canadians  
**Cause:** Unknown.  
**Treatment:** Various strategies, limited effectiveness, insurance problems, Canadian pain physician shortage.  
**Cure:** Unknown

### Data Source:

The 1997 London Fibromyalgia Study, Dr. Kevin P. White (available through MedPub.com):  
A respected and rigorous 1997 Canadian study estimated 1 million to 1.5 million (3.3 - 5%) Canadians suffer from Fibromyalgia (FM) and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). The low estimate, 1 million, is also low compared to US and UK estimates which suggest 4-5% of their populations have FM and/or CFS.

### Further information references available in the FM-CFS.ca 'Media' section:

- 1) Regional Media Contacts across Canada, local groups.
- 2) Background information, statistics, sources, organisations.
- 3) Quotes from community leaders, physicians, patients, care-givers.
- 4) Personal stories from across the country: photos, first names available.
- 5) Mayors recognising the May 12th FM & CFS Awareness Day.
- 6) Patient Registry - a data bank of volunteers for FM & CFS research, secure at FM-CFS.ca in the Patient section.
- 7) This Press Release is online in Adobe PDF form at: <http://www.fm-cfs.ca/PR-May-12.pdf>