



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec
Environmental Health Association of Québec

Press Release

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INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS DAY

for MCS, ME/CFS and FM

Environmental Health Association of Quebec

Contact: Michel Gaudet

Tel: 514.683.5701

www.aseq-ehaq.ca

In Quebec there are around 300,000 people who live with Environmental sensitivities/Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (ES/MCS), Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and/or Fibromyalgia (FM). Yet for most, their illnesses go without proper medical treatments due to the lack of Government and Public Awareness, limited Doctor Training, and the need for a Designated Treatment Centre.

The Environmental Health Association of Québec (EHAQ) is a non-profit, charitable organization founded in 2004. Present membership in the group is over 1000. The mission of EHAQ encompasses not only support (education, resources, telephone line (provides comfort and information), support meetings, healthy housing, resource guide, newsletter, etc) for people suffering from environmental sensitivities but also prevention through education on the use of ecological strategies in order to maintain a healthy environment.

MCS, ME/CFS and FM are all chronic, disabling conditions which are not visually recognizable. They affect people of all ages – youth and children included. They have many overlapping symptoms but can be distinguished from each other, using published diagnostic guidelines.

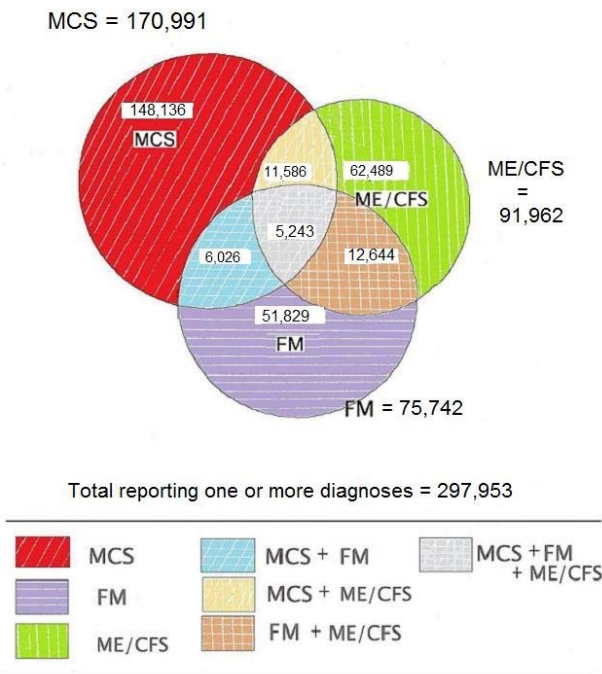
Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS), also known as Environmental Sensitivity, results in physical symptoms such as headaches and fatigue when exposed to a wide range of chemical substances. Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) involves at least two neurological changes (such as cognitive impairment), sleep dysfunction and often autonomic, immune and/or endocrine system manifestations in addition to pain and fatigue. Fibromyalgia (FM) presents with widespread pain and other symptoms including fatigue.

Recent research is showing that there is a biological basis for the symptoms noted above. At this time, there is no known cure for any of the illnesses.

The situation for those who live with these conditions is very difficult, on many levels.

Although these illnesses have consensus definitions and treatment guidelines, awareness in the medical community is extremely limited. The few doctors who are knowledgeable about and treat these illnesses are stretched beyond capacity. Many patients are rejected from their family doctor's practice when a diagnosis is made or they find it impossible to get a family doctor when they have these conditions. There are no education, treating or research centres in Quebec or Canada.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS),
Fibromyalgia (FM) and Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS)
in Québec



ME/CFS, FM and MCS QUEBEC Canadian Community Health Survey 2005
Chart created May 7, 2009 using data from the CCHS 2005

There is limited public awareness about the illnesses. There is an urgent need for information to be made available to the public so that they have a greater understanding about the illnesses and the challenges those who live with them face on a daily basis. Help is also needed at the most basic levels of home and long-term care. Many people with these illnesses cannot care for themselves or their families. They cannot work and must rely on government support. Some are too sick to even fill out the requisite paperwork without assistance.

See the chart to the side for a breakdown of the affected population in QUEBEC. These numbers exceed that of many other better known chronic conditions. This large population is underserved by both medical and social services.

It is costing the government both in direct health care costs (as people go from doctor to doctor searching for answers) and in losses to the economy (as they are forced to stop working, purchasing and paying taxes). It is estimated the combined loss of productivity

due to these illnesses in CANADA (which has an estimated number affected of well over a million) is more than 20 billion dollars annually and that the direct medical cost is over 2 billion dollars annually. The Quebec figures are proportionately staggering. The provincial government has an important role to play in improving the situation.

EHAQ will strive to raise awareness within communities, corporations, governments, educational institutions, the medical community and the general public to prevent further cases of environmental sensitivity. To help us in this venture we will work with doctors, scientists, interested groups and individuals across Canada and create ties with similar organizations throughout North America and overseas.