



Lupus Canada

***Working together to conquer lupus***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FIRST NEW LUPUS TREATMENT IN ALMOST 50 YEARS!**

**MARKHAM, ON – July, 12, 2011** – Health Canada’s recent approval of BENLYSTA™ marks the first new treatment available in almost 50 years to the over 1:1000 Canadian men, women and children who are living with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE) an autoimmune disease with no known cause or cure. Lupus most often affects women of child-bearing age (15-45) but can affect men, children and the elderly. Nine times more women than men will however be diagnosed with lupus.

“Lupus is a life-altering and life-threatening diagnosis” says Catherine Madden, Executive Director of Lupus Canada. “This incurable disease impacts and destroys many organs in the body and can cause constant pain, immobility, organ failure and even death. Lupus is seriously under-recognized and under-funded, but dedication to new therapies and new research fuels our hope for a cure. While Lupus Canada works towards a vision of *life without lupus*, we concentrate our efforts on ensuring people with lupus are *living well*. The approval of BENLYSTA™ means there is a new treatment option for Canadians living with lupus.”

Known as the “disease with 1000 faces”, because its symptoms vary so greatly from person to person, lupus affects over 1:1000 Canadian men, women and children, yet many people are still unaware of the disease. Because of the varied symptoms, lupus can be extremely difficult to diagnose. The symptoms of lupus often mimic other illnesses, and it can attack any tissue or organ in the body including skin, muscles, joints, blood and blood vessels, lungs, heart, kidneys and the brain. Common and often chronic symptoms of lupus include joint pain and inflammation, skin rashes, sun sensitivity, extreme fatigue, fever, chest pain and hair loss.

“As a child, I understood only that my father suffered from lupus – he couldn’t play ball, ride a bike or walk to the store... many days he was in too much pain to be able to get out of bed” says Kendra MacDonald, President, Board of Directors, Lupus Canada. “It was not only my father that suffered from lupus for over 20 years, our entire family was touched by the disease and the constant fear that the next complication would take his life which it ultimately did in 2001. The arrival of a new treatment helps to bring hope for other families like ours!”

Lupus Canada, working together with its provincial partners, is a national voluntary organization dedicated to improving the lives of people living with lupus through advocacy, education, public awareness, support and research. We provide educational and support resources for people whose lives are touched by lupus, raise awareness of Lupus and provide funding for research. Through the support of events such as Walk for Lupus and generous, engaged individual and corporate donors, we are able to continue our work on behalf of people living with lupus.

To learn more about lupus, Lupus Canada, our member organizations and divisions, visit [www.lupuscanada.org](http://www.lupuscanada.org) or contact us at 1-800-661-1468. To learn more about BENLYSTA™, contact your doctor.