



Almost Half of People in North America Say They Would Not Be Comfortable Sharing Skin-to-Skin Touch with Someone Who Is HIV+

Casey House launches Healing House, the world's first HIV+ spa in Toronto

TORONTO – November 22, 2018 – On November 29, Casey House is launching Healing House, the world's first pop-up HIV+ spa in Toronto, Canada. A recent study commissioned by Casey House revealed that half of Canadians and almost half of Americans would be nervous to find out they'd come in contact with someone living with HIV/AIDS. Healing House will explore the power of compassion through touch to address the stigma experienced by people living with HIV/AIDS.

While 88% of Canadians agree Canada is a compassionate country, more than half of the population would not be comfortable touching someone living with HIV/AIDS. Casey House was founded on compassion and this new campaign will encourage people to look inward and explore how understanding they truly are, by revealing what North Americans really think about HIV/AIDS.

"Compassion is something Canadians are known for, yet as a country we lack empathy for individuals living with HIV/AIDS. It is time for compassion to win over complacency. With the launch of Healing House, we're going to lead by example and show the world how positive touch can be a form of healing for those who deal daily with misperceptions and the stigma of HIV/AIDS," said Joanne Simons, CEO of Casey House. "In 2017, 1.8 million people were newly infected with HIV, making the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS a global [phenomenon](#)."

Healing House is a positive space for people to experience the healing power of touch while showing kindness to others. Lending her expertise to the cause, Melissa Doldron, RMT for the Toronto Blue Jays has trained 15 people who are HIV+, the Healers, so they can provide healing touch services like hand, neck, and shoulder massages. The one-on-one interaction will allow Canadians to see that these individuals are more than their disease and deserve compassion like everyone else.

"When I was first diagnosed with HIV, one of my initial thoughts was that I would be alone forever and that I'd never be touched or loved again. When I disclosed my status, many people close to me were warm and caring, but acquaintances, medical professionals and people who didn't know me well showed obvious signs of discomfort and made excuses not to touch me," said Randy, HIV+ Healer at Healing House. "I believe in the healing power of touch and I am proud to have trained alongside 14 other Healers. My hope is that Canadians will embrace Healing House and give me faith that we are as kind and understanding as we think we are."

Casey House Smash Stigma Study

In partnership with Leger, the second annual Casey House Smash Stigma Study revealed concerning statistics around Canadians' perceptions of HIV/AIDS:

- Although 91% of Canadians believe it is in our human nature to need positive touch, only one-third (38%) said they'd be willing to share skin-to-skin touch with someone who was HIV+.
- 71% of Canadians would be nervous or ashamed to share health news openly if tested HIV+ which is a 1% increase from last year, indicating the stigma around HIV/AIDS is still prevalent.
- 44% of Canadians are complacent when it comes to negative stigma around the disease.
- 79% of North Americans say they are willing to share skin-to-skin contact with someone who has cancer, but only 41% say they are willing to share touch with someone who is living with HIV/AIDS.

Healing House launches with a media-only day on November 29. Doors open to the public on November 30 from 12:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. and December 1 from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. All services are free of charge. To view a full-service schedule and book an appointment, you can visit: www.smashstigma.ca. You can also visit www.caseyhouse.com to donate and help support ground-breaking care based in Toronto.

For high res photography of the participating HIV+ healers, :15 sec campaign video, and additional Canadian and U.S. survey findings, please visit: <http://bit.ly/2PHO2hk>. You can also follow along here: #smashstigma.

For more information on Healing House, or to book an interview with Joanne Simons or the HIV+ Healers, please contact:

Jessica Leroux
Narrative
Jessica.leroux@narrative.ca
(416) 843-7210

Kylee Berencsi
Narrative
kylee.berencsi@narrative.ca
(416) 579-0861

About Casey House:

Casey House is Canada's first and only stand-alone hospital for people living with HIV/AIDS. In 1988, Casey House's first patient was delivered to the door by a team of medics wearing hazmat suits. Casey House greeted him with a warm embrace and gave him comfort until the end of his life. Through our innovative and comprehensive approach to health care, we remain one of the few places where people living with HIV/AIDS can seek care without judgment. We are more than a place that saves lives, we are a place that speaks up, shines understanding through compassion, and empowers our clients to get better.

Although many people who live with HIV can manage their disease effectively with a support network and access to treatment, Casey House clients are not part of that majority and fall into the category of the 40% of people in Ontario not on treatment. They are vulnerable, seeking safety and need nourishment. Casey House will continue to provide unequivocal compassion to clients in need providing them with a holistic approach to their care and treatment.

Survey Methodology:

A survey of 1,581 Canadians residents was completed online between October 19-22, 2018 using Leger's online panel, LegerWeb. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of +/- 2.46%, 19 times out of 20.

A survey of 1,501 Americans was completed online between November 1-16, 2018, using Leger's online panel, LegerWeb. A probability sample of the same size would yield a margin of error of +/-2.5%, 19 times out of 20.

NOTE: North American data includes Americans and Canadians surveyed only.