

## News Release

For immediate release

May 10, 2006

### Experts warn shaking a baby can cause blindness

**Vancouver, B.C.** – Experts will gather in Vancouver this month to discuss Shaken Baby Syndrome, a violent form of child abuse that is the leading cause of non-accidental death in infants and the most common cause for inflicted brain injury in the first year of a child's life. In addition, experts warn shaking a baby may cause blindness.

"Many people may realize that shaking a baby can cause brain damage but what they do not realize is that the same back and forth forces that occur in the brain can also cause permanent blindness," said Dr. Alex Levin, Staff Ophthalmologist in the Departments of Paediatrics and Ophthalmology and Vision Sciences at the Hospital for Sick Children, in Toronto, Ontario. "Retinal hemorrhage is the term used to describe the bleeding inside the different layers of the retina in the back of the eye."

"The retina is like film in a camera: it takes the images we see and translate them into an electric message which is sent to the brain where it is perceived as vision. Bleeding can be caused by the dramatic forces and the motion of the eyeball when a baby is being violently shaken. Although the hemorrhages usually go away, the child may be left with irreversible damage to the brain and optic nerve, the nerve that carries the vision messages from the eye to the brain. As a result there may be permanent vision loss or even total blindness. Eye examination by an ophthalmologist is an essential part of the process involved to tell if a child has been abused."

Dr. Levin is one of the expert speakers at the second B.C. Symposium on Shaken Baby Syndrome which will be held on Friday, May 19, 2006 at the CHAN Auditorium on the grounds of BC Children's Hospital. Experts will speak about dangerous outcomes of this type of head injury, important recent research, and what is being done now in B.C. to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome.

-more-

The B.C. Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention Program based at BC Children's Hospital has organized the symposium with co-sponsors: the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Fraser Health, BC Children's Hospital, and the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, USA.

Registration is \$75 and includes lunch. For more information about the symposium and registration, please call Jocelyn Conway at 604-875-2000 ext. 5344 or email [jconway@cw.bc.ca](mailto:jconway@cw.bc.ca). For additional registration information please go to [www.dontshake.com](http://www.dontshake.com) - 'Upcoming Conferences' information page.

- 30 -

**Media contact:**

Public Affairs & Communications, BC Children's Hospital  
Phone: 604-875-2301