

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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British Columbia's first symposium on Shaken Baby Syndrome

Vancouver, B.C. – For the first time in B.C., a symposium on shaken baby syndrome (SBS) will be held on Thursday, March 3, 2005 at the Chan Auditorium at the Education & Research Centre for Child Health, located on the Children's & Women's Health Centre of British Columbia campus.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), BC Children's Hospital and the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome-USA (NCSBS) are sponsoring the symposium in an effort to stimulate awareness and education on SBS, a violent form of child abuse.

SBS is a serious problem in North America and B.C. It is the leading cause of non-accidental death in infants and is the most common cause for inflicted brain injury in the first year of a child's life. Of the babies shaken each year, nearly one-third die. Of those that survive, approximately 80 per cent are left with permanent brain damage.

"This is an issue that is as preventable as it is tragic," said Marilyn Sandberg, executive director of NCSBS, SBS consultant at BC Children's and symposium director. "Shaken baby syndrome is child abuse and leaves a legacy of sadness. By raising public awareness and collaborating with MCFD personnel, social workers, investigators, medical personnel, educators, and child care providers, we hope to stop shaken baby syndrome."

The most common symptoms of SBS are bleeding on the brain (subdural hematoma), massive brain swelling (cerebral edema) and bleeding inside the eye (retinal hemorrhages). The combination of these symptoms do not always appear together in every case, yet they are the most direct signs a child is suffering from SBS.

Shaking usually occurs when a frustrated caregiver loses control from an inconsolable crying baby. Crying is the number one trigger leading to an infant being shaken.

“It is important to understand that at times infants will cry despite all the comforting efforts of their parents or caregivers,” said Dr. Ron Barr, Canada Research Chair and professor of pediatrics at the University of British Columbia and director of the Centre for Community Child Health Research at the BC Research Institute for Children’s & Women’s Health. “As with SBS, there is a direct timing relationship between crying patterns and the rates of physical abuse, neglect and infant homicide.”

A Canadian joint statement published in 2001 by Health Canada states the need for additional training on SBS. It says the following:

There is a need for shared commitment and coordination among health, child welfare, police, social services, justice and education professionals, as well as the community at large. Knowledge of Shaken Baby Syndrome should be provided in the professional education of all the involved disciplines, and ongoing education needs to be provided as new developments occur in the field.

(For more information on the Canadian Joint statement, see <http://www.cps.ca/english/statements/IP/cps01-01.htm>.)

Through education and training, SBS can be prevented. This symposium has the cooperation of worldwide medical and legal experts offering the necessary training to strengthen local prevention efforts and programs protecting innocent children from this abuse.

Registration is \$75 and includes lunch. For more information about the symposium and registration, please call Diana Lee at 604-875-2000 ext. 6005 or email her at dplee@cw.bc.ca. For additional registration information please go to www.dontshake.com or view the symposium brochure at www.dontshake.com/images/pageimages/symposium.pdf.

BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, including newborns and adolescents. For more information please visit www.cw.bc.ca.

The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information please visit www.phsa.ca.

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