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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Attention: Health/Food/Lifestyle Section Editors

Anxiety disorders in teens risk factor for suicide

Approximately 3,400 Victoria kids affected by anxiety disorders

Victoria – A New Zealand study featured in a recent issue of Psychological Medicine revealed that anxiety disorders may be a risk factor for suicide in adolescents, and that the risk for suicide goes up as the number of anxiety disorders increases. The authors concluded that effective management of anxiety in youth may be important in reducing that risk.

Approximately 10 per cent of children and teenagers suffer from one or more anxiety disorders, and 80 per cent go untreated. That amounts to approximately 3,400 Victoria children and teenagers.

To help parents learn how to manage anxiety disorders in their children and ultimately reduce the suicide risk in adolescence and young adulthood, AnxietyBC, with assistance from the F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids Mental Health, will be presenting a Family Skill Building Seminar in Victoria on parenting children with anxiety disorders.

The free and helpful seminar takes place in Victoria on Jan. 24, 2008. The seminar will teach parents how to identify if a child has an anxiety disorder, and how to manage the problem at home.

“Anxiety as a risk factor for suicide in teens is not surprising since struggling with anxiety in one’s daily life is mentally and physically exhausting. Many people, children and teens included, often feel worn down, hopeless and depressed as a result,” said Dr. Melisa Robichaud, the psychologist who will be facilitating the Victoria seminar.

Anxiety disorders may first present in children and teens as an unwillingness to participate in normal activities most kids enjoy such as sports, sleepovers and even attending school, as well as in somatic symptoms such as chronic stomachaches and headaches. However, these disorders may eventually permeate every area of life.

“Many parents – understandably – delay seeking help for their anxious kids as they are often hopeful that their children will “get over it”. However, although it is certainly normal for children to have some fears, research shows us that most children don’t grow out of their anxiety once it becomes a problem, they grow into it,” said Dr. Robichaud.

“For this reason, it is important that children and parents learn how to manage anxiety as soon as possible before it becomes a bigger problem. This is particularly the case because anxiety is treatable: the sooner anxious children and teens can learn effective anxiety management techniques, the better,” added Dr. Robichaud.

The AnxietyBC-sponsored Family Skill Building Seminar takes place Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. at

Spectrum School, 957 West Burnside Road. AnxietyBC is also hosting seminars in Penticton, North Vancouver and Burnaby. For more information, call (604) 525-7566 or visit www.anxietybc.com.

Funding for AnxietyBC programs is provided by Fraser Health, BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, the Ministry for Children and Family Development, and other regional health authorities and foundations. AnxietyBC members play a key role in supporting the ongoing dissemination of resources and advocacy with their membership fees and donations, while the public and corporate sponsors assist AnxietyBC during its fund-raising campaigns. AnxietyBC is very grateful to all its supporters and well-wishers.

AnxietyBC is one of seven provincial agencies that make up the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. These agencies are working together to provide high quality, evidence-based information on mental health and substance use to help individuals and families living with mental health and substance use problems live productive, fulfilling lives. Funding is provided by BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, with additional support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

AnxietyBC, a non-profit organization, was established in 1999 by a group of concerned consumers, family members and professionals. Its mission is to facilitate positive solutions for those living with anxiety by increasing awareness, promoting education and improving access to effective treatments.

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