



Dec. 10, 2007

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

Anxiety disorders in teens risk factor for suicide

Approximately 3,400 Burnaby kids affected by anxiety disorders

Vancouver – A recent New Zealand study featured in a 2007 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 Burnaby 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 Burnaby on parenting children with anxiety disorders.

The free and helpful seminar takes place in Burnaby on Jan. 22, 2008. The seminar will teach parents how to identify if a child has an anxiety disorder, and how to manage the problem at home.

“Much research has demonstrated that anxiety disorders are a risk factor for depression and suicide. This is not surprising because anxiety disorders and depression are highly comorbid – that is to say, they often co-exist,” said Adrienne Wang, the cognitive behavior therapist who will be facilitating the Burnaby 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.

“A big challenge for parents with children who have anxiety disorders is not blaming themselves for their children’s problems. It is often no one’s fault. There are many factors that may contribute to a child’s difficulties with anxiety,” said Wang.

“Moreover, it is often difficult for parents to know how to help their children overcome anxiety because sometimes what seems helpful may inadvertently worsen or prolong the child’s problem. For example, allowing the child to avoid a feared situation (e.g., school, sleeping alone) as a means of coping can actually perpetuate the child’s fear of the situation.

“Parents may also struggle with finding the appropriate treatment for their children and staying hopeful. This is why AnxietyBC is providing these public information seminars to promote parents’

awareness of cognitive-behavioural therapy that has been scientifically proven to help children and youths effectively cope with their anxiety,” added Wang.

The AnxietyBC-sponsored Family Skill Building Seminar takes place Jan. 22 at 7 p.m. at Our Lady of Mercy School Hall, 7455 10th Avenue in Burnaby. AnxietyBC is also hosting seminars in Penticton, North Vancouver and Victoria. 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.

-30-

**Media Contact: Michele Penz, Calico Communications
for AnxietyBC, 778.888.2249**