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

Anxiety disorders in teens risk factor for suicide

More than 550 Penticton area kids affected by anxiety disorders

Penticton – 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 more than 550 children and teenagers in the Penticton area.

To help parents learn how to manage anxiety disorders in their children and ultimately reduce the risk of suicidality in adolescence and young adulthood, AnxietyBC, with assistance from the F.O.R.C.E. Society for Kids Mental Health, is presenting a family skill building seminar on parenting children with anxiety disorders. The free and helpful seminar takes place in Penticton Nov. 1 and 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 Penticton seminar. “That’s why it’s essential that parents help their children and teens learn effective management strategies for anxiety before it becomes an even bigger problem.”

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.

Dr. Kathleen Reay, a Penticton-based registered clinical counsellor, says that anxiety disorders are fairly common among her younger clientele, and that many parents genuinely want to help their children avoid suffering anxiety provoking situations.

“Unfortunately, parents who do this may actually reinforce anxious behaviors in their children by inadvertently communicating that anxiety-provoking situations are to be feared. Numerous research studies clearly demonstrate that avoidance perpetuates anxiety,” said Dr. Reay.

According to Dr. Reay, other parents simply have difficulty empathizing with their child’s worries and may dismiss those fears as silly or all in his or her head. “It’s important that parents find a balance between keeping their children safe and granting them autonomy.

“The free seminar being offered by AnxietyBC will be helpful in providing practical skills that parents can use to help their children cope in their environments. It will help parents support their children more effectively,” added Dr. Reay.

The AnxietyBC-sponsored Family Skill Building Seminar takes place Nov. 1 at 7 p.m. at the Cleland Theatre, 325 Power Street. AnxietyBC will also be hosting seminars in North Vancouver, Victoria and Burnaby. For more information, 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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