



PRESS RELEASE

To the attention of news / career / education / health editors

Early Childhood Intervention Prevents Youth Violence

Physically aggressive preschoolers are at high risk of becoming violent teenagers and adults

Current interventions to address youth violence come too late and can aggravate the problem

Montréal, Québec, September 17, 2008—Over 200 people attended an important conference on the prevention of youth violence today at the CHU Sainte-Justine. The conference was organized by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD), with the participation of the Early Childhood Learning Knowledge Centre (ECLKC), the CHU Sainte-Justine Research Centre, and the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation.

Conference participants discussed intervention in young children as the most effective means to prevent violence.

“Youth violence in our communities and schools is a major concern across Canada,” said Richard Tremblay, conference organizer. “Most efforts to curb this violence fail because they come too late. Violent preschoolers grow into violent adolescents if they do not receive adequate support at the right time. We have found that the best way to reduce juvenile violence is to address violence in young children.”

Recent studies show that interventions with juvenile delinquents can actually increase the problem. Placement of juvenile delinquents in residential facilities consolidates deviant behaviour and significantly increases the likelihood of adult criminal behaviour.

Physical aggression is an inherent human behaviour. People do not *learn* to physically aggress; they spontaneously use aggression very soon after birth. Infants express anger before the age of two months, and as toddlers they bite, kick and hit to obtain what they want or to express frustration or anger.

In fact, physical aggression peaks at about 2-3 years of age, and then gradually decreases as children learn to communicate through language, expressing their needs and frustrations in a more constructive manner.

Most children are nurtured in supportive environments and learn not to use aggression. However, between 5 to 10 percent of Canadian children fail to learn alternatives to aggression and continue to engage in violent behaviour during the elementary school years. By the time they enter high school they have the muscle and brain power to be a serious threat to their community.

“We must address violence in childhood, and intervene early to teach them not to use violence. More importantly, we must pay special attention to at-risk children. And we have the tools to identify the children most at risk, as well as the tools to help them,” said André Chagnon, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Lucie and André Chagnon Foundation.

About the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development is a consortium of Canadian organizations that promote the best knowledge on early childhood development among the public, professionals and policymakers to help them have a positive impact on children's development.

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, based at the Université de Montréal, is one of four Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being set up by the Public Health Agency of Canada.
www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

– 30 –

For information:

Gabrielle Collu
Tel.: 514 844-7338
Cell : 514 943-6557
collug@videotron.ca