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New Resource Supports Youth Concussion Care and Awareness

Halifax, NS, May 3, 2012 – Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences (Ontario Shores) and stopconcussions.com are proud to be among the more than 20 supporters who have joined together to support education concerning brain injury in youth.

Media conferences were hosted today in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Ontario announcing this initiative and revealing supporting partner organizations. The initiative is led by Dr. Stan Kutcher, Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health, and is conducted in collaboration with a team of international experts. Together the team developed two comprehensive brain injury guides, one for youth and a companion guide for coaches and parents.

“We are fulfilling a need for engaging, easy-to-understand information that is based on the most recent scientific studies about brain injury,” explains Dr. Kutcher. “Young people who suffer a concussion during their adolescent years may have difficulties in various aspects of their lives, not only right after the injury but even up to thirty years or longer. The best way to prevent traumatic brain injury is to recognize it when it occurs, know what to do if a concussion happens and ensure that we do not unwittingly act in a way that can make the problem worse.”

Concussions are traumatic brain injuries that can often go unnoticed by young athletes, coaches and parents. Like most injuries, victims think they will heal over time; however, brain injuries can have much stronger effects on individuals. Their impact can be life-altering, especially to an adolescent who is still growing and developing. Until recently, we had not realized how serious even a mild or moderate concussion could be to the health and well-being of teenagers.

The Toronto event, held at the Hockey Hall of Fame, was supported by a number of NHL alumni including Ron Ellis, Keith Primeau and Wayne Primeau. Remarks were also given by Catherine Fife, President of the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association and Dr. Ian Dawe, Chief-of-Staff at Ontario Shores.

As a specialized mental health care centre, Ontario Shores understands the long-term impacts of acquired brain injury. Ontario Shores is also working with Dr. Kutcher to enhance mental health literacy in Ontario schools through training and advocacy. The introduction of these guides is one more tool to help provide better mental health care for youth.

“Concussions can have a significant impact on the life of a young person,” says Dr. Dawe. “As with any mental health issue, early identification, treatment and a recovery plan are vital. This educational resource along with the Ontario Shores Adolescent Mental Health Literacy Program in Ontario high schools will be instrumental in supporting the well being of our youth.”

The two resource guides are designed in simple terms to assist with signs, symptoms, treatment, prevention and support: Understanding Brain Injury in Adolescence, which is designed for the adult in a young person’s life (parent, coach, teacher, etc.) and the Brain Injury Guide for Youth, specifically designed for youth.

Several leading sports and health organizations have agreed to support and use these guides. “The more people understand about brain injury, the better chance health professionals have for early detection, which may prevent further worsening of the injury and ensure those who need it receive the right treatment,” emphasizes Dr. Kutcher.

The guides have become a catalyst for a series of partnerships with sporting organizations and other brain injury advocates across Canada. They’re part of an initiative brought on by stopconcussions.com to bring concussion-related resources into organizations across Canada.

“These guides are crucial in educating everyone on this very serious issue,” says Kerry Goulet, Director of stopconcussions.com. “The information is so important in the battle against this invisible injury. We are ecstatic to be partnering with Dr. Kutcher and his great team.”

Baseball Canada has also taken the step to have these materials available to national teams and provincial organizations across the country.

The guides and more information can be downloaded for free at the education/schools section at <http://www.ontarioshores.ca/education/highschoolandelementary/> or the resource section at teenmentalhealth.org. Copies of the guide can also be purchased in print version from the website and delivered directly to the purchaser.

The creation of the Brain Injury Guides was made possible through the support of Sun Life Financial, T. R. Meighen Family Foundation, Dalhousie Medical Research Foundation and the Kathryn A. Weldon Charitable Foundation.

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