

CPSP head injury study continues for a third year



Shaking is dangerous and deadly for babies. But while that message has long been promoted by groups like the Canadian Paediatric Society, more research is needed to fully understand the frequency and causes of paediatric head injuries in Canada. A Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program study, *Head injury secondary to suspected child maltreatment (abuse or neglect)*, is investigating the dangers of shaking and has now been extended for a third year due to the importance of the issue.

“Given that these injuries are relatively uncommon, it is helpful to have as much data over as long a period of time as possible,” said Dr. Michelle Ward, co-investigator of the CPSP study and a consultant paediatrician at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa. The study data will help

investigators understand how common head injuries are and will help better describe their characteristics.

In 2006, the study confirmed 51 cases of head injury from suspected child maltreatment, resulting in three deaths. “Child abuse is the most common cause of serious head injury in children under one year of age,” said Dr. Ward in an interview. “Head injuries account for almost all fatal and life-threatening abuse injuries in children.”

Despite education programs that have existed for over 30 years, many adults, students, and pregnant and parenting teens are still not aware of the dangers of shaking a baby. That's why Dr. Ward advises that health professionals educate all new and

expectant parents about normal patterns of infant crying, strategies for dealing with a crying baby, and the serious consequences of shaking or forcefulness.

“As physicians, we need to make time to ask questions and provide suggestions for the day-to-day difficulties that parents face in child-rearing,” she said. If health professionals don't ask critical questions, they can't help provide support and guidance.

Dr. Ward also emphasizes the importance of community support, neighborhood services, and public education programs in helping parents understand the dangers of shaking a baby. ✱