

PRESS RELEASE

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Family/Parenting, Children's Health, Women's Interests, General Editorial

National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome to Implement \$1.5 Million Prevention Project

OGDEN, UT - June 7, 2004 /Send2Press Newswire/ -- Crying, especially inconsolable crying, is the most common trigger for shaking and physical abuse of infants. A new research program may provide parents and other caretakers the tools they need to prevent shaken baby syndrome (SBS), a form of child abuse that can cause immediate damage to the victim's brain.

The National Center, headquartered in Ogden, Utah, is partnering with leading institutions and investigators to test and implement the program. Partners include the Harborview Injury Prevention and Research Center of the University of Washington and Frederick P. Rivara MD, MPH, co-principal investigator; Ronald G. Barr, MDCM, FRCPC of the University of British Columbia, principal investigator; and consultants at the School of Public Health, University of California, Berkeley.

The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, New York City, has donated \$1.2 million and the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation, Salt Lake City, Utah, has donated \$300,000 to fund the research.

Called the Period of PURPLE Crying, the research program is designed to change the knowledge and behavior of parents, and provide health care providers with the skills and materials to simply and effectively educate parents about infant crying, thus reducing frustration and stress that leads to shaking and infant abuse.

Parents participating in the project will receive information about crying, as well as a magnet, bib and video. Parents will track their baby's crying and steps the parent takes regarding the crying.

The acronym PURPLE describes the behavioral characteristics that normal babies go through and that can be very frustrating to parents and caretakers.

The letters in PURPLE stand for:

- P Peak of Crying Crying peaks during the second month, decreasing after that;
- U Unexpected Crying comes and goes unexpectedly, for no apparent reason;
- R Resists Soothing Crying continues despite all soothing efforts by caregivers;
- P Pain-like Face Infants look like they are in pain, even when they are not;
- L Long Lasting Crying can go on for 30-40 minutes, and longer;
- E Evening Crying Crying occurs more in the late afternoon and evening.

Research has shown that all normal babies have inconsolable crying in the first few months. Some have much more than others, with infants in approximately the top 20 percent considered to experience colic. These infants have weeks to months of inconsolable crying bouts that occur in the first four months, usually peaking during the second month. There is little a parent can do to reduce it and this inconsolable crying can really frustrate parents.

"Parents who would never consider hitting their baby become frustrated with the continual crying to the point that they shake him or her," said Dr. Barr. "If the shaking is mild, there may be no external signs of harm. However, the shaking may stun and quiet the baby temporarily. This makes the parent think the shaking stopped the crying and that no harm was done."

Barr reported that the age when babies begin to increase their crying (two weeks) is the same age infants begin to be hospitalized for SBS, and the increase and then decrease in crying amounts are reflected in increases and decreases of hospitalizations for SBS. The peak age of SBS hospitalizations is slightly later than the peak age of crying, probably because many cases are the result of repeated shakings.

The research program began in May 2004 and runs through 2007. If proven effective, it will be replicated throughout the U.S. and Canada.

More information: <http://www.dontshake.com>

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