

News Release

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Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
College of Medicine

Penn State College of Medicine
Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center
Strategic Services, A140
600 Centerview Drive
P.O. Box 855
Hershey, PA 17033-0855

Tel: (717) 531-8606
Fax: (717) 531-6999

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MEDIA INQUIRIES CONTACT:

Megan Manlove (717) 531-8604

e-mail: mmanlove@hmc.psu.edu

PENN STATE HERSHEY MEDICAL CENTER RECEIVES \$2.8 MILLION GRANT FOR SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

Program will focus on reducing Shaken Baby Syndrome cases

HERSHEY, PA— A program to educate parents and other caregivers of children of the dangers of abusive head trauma got a major boost in central Pa. today thanks to a \$2.8 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the continued efforts of a Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center team of medical professionals.

Mark Dias, M.D., a pediatric neurosurgeon, leads the Penn State team, implementing an education and awareness campaign to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome—a cause of severe brain damage or death for hundreds of children each year—in Pennsylvania. Dias started the program in 1998 in upstate New York. His program has reduced cases of Shaken Baby Syndrome in that state by over 50 percent since it began almost nine years ago. **Early indicators show his program's success in Pennsylvania could make it a national model for other states.**

On Monday, Dias and his team, representatives from the Pa. Department of Health, and the parents of a child who was a victim of Shaken Baby Syndrome came together at Penn State Hershey Medical Center for the announcement of the recent grant award from the CDC. The Medical Center's program is one of just two in the nation to receive CDC support for education and preparedness of this disorder.

“We are so pleased that the CDC, by awarding this money to our program, has recognized that abusive head trauma in young children is a problem that can be addressed by programs such as ours,” Dias said. “This grant award lets us expand our program, measure its successes and costs, and continue helping to reduce the number of baby shaking cases we see all too often.”

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Dias started the Pennsylvania program as a pilot study in 2002, following on the success in New York. That year, the state passed The Shaken Baby Syndrome Education Act. With initial funding from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and subsequently from the state Department of Health, nurse educators provided training and prevention materials to staff of the state's 118 birthing and children's hospitals.

Since May 2006, all new parents giving birth at these institutions received information about preventing Shaken Baby Syndrome. More than 90 percent of those parents participated in Dias' program by signing a statement of commitment acknowledging receipt of the educational materials.

The CDC grant will allow Dias' program to enter a new phase. Nurse educators will begin training staff at physicians' offices that provide pediatric care in 16 counties in central Pennsylvania—15 other counties in the region were randomly selected to not receive this training or materials—and provide materials to be presented to parents at two-, four- and six-month immunization visits. The team will then compare participation rates among the counties as well as compare data on abusive head trauma cases reported in those counties.

The study should indicate whether the education and prevention materials help reduce incidence rates, as it has in New York, and also allow them to estimate costs for implementing the program in a community.

Shaken Baby Syndrome occurs when an adult shakes an infant or young child, typically in response to frustration over the child crying. Since babies heads are large in comparison to their underdeveloped neck muscles, the shaking causes their heads to whip back and forth, allowing the brain to repeatedly strike the inside of the skull. Blood vessels are damaged, and bleeding and swelling follow, which cause the long-term neurological damage or death of the child.

Nationwide, between 1,000 and 3,000 children become victims of Shaken Baby Syndrome each year; about 25 percent die from their injuries.

About Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center

Founded in 1963 through a gift from The Milton S. Hershey Foundation, Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center is one of the leading teaching and research hospitals in the country. The 501-bed Medical Center is a provider of high-level, patient-focused medical care. Annually the Medical Center admits more than 26,000 patients, accepts more than 766,000 outpatient visits, receives nearly 48,000 patients for emergency room visits and performs more than 23,000 surgical procedures. The Medical Center campus also includes Penn State College of Medicine (Penn State University's medical school), Penn State Cancer Institute, and Penn State Children's Hospital—the region's only children's hospital.

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