

Media Release



3 September 2015

Child Protection experts focus on unseen effects of Domestic Violence

Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick recognises National Child Protection Week

6-12 September 2015

This Child Protection Week, experts at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick (SCH) are urging the community to be aware of the rising issue of domestic violence, and the long term effects it can have on children.

More than 60 per cent of children referred to the SCH Child Protection Unit (CPU) this year have reported past or present exposure to domestic violence. Between 2014 and 2015, domestic violence was the primary issue in 50 per cent of family cases seen by the Child Protection Counselling Service (CPCS).

"It is important to recognise that domestic violence manifests itself in many different forms and the effects of being exposed to this as a child continue long after the incidents have taken place," said Deanne Dale, Clinical Co-ordinator of the CPU at SCH.

"While children may not be the primary target of the violence, living in a family environment where violence is taking place can have traumatic impacts similar to living in a war zone. Children exposed to domestic violence often suffer ongoing psychological trauma, relationship problems and risk taking behaviour that can continue into adulthood.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics*, 54 per cent of women who had experienced violence by a current partner had children in their care at the time. Thirty-one per cent said their children had witnessed the violence.

Kelly Morrison from CPCS says the community can play an important role in protecting children and families.

"Protecting children is everyone's business. We ask that members of the community look out, not only for physical signs of domestic violence, but also the behaviours and emotions that we see in children who have been exposed. These include children withdrawing from friends, finding it hard to concentrate and learn at school and displaying violent or aggressive behaviours. We can all play a part in protecting children from domestic violence, if you suspect a child may be at risk, we urge you to call the Family and Community Services (FaCS) Helpline on 132111."

The CPU is comprised of expert paediatricians, social workers and psychologists, and both services are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The CPCS accepts referrals from FaCS and provides intensive long-term therapy to families and children who have been impacted by violence.

Child Protection Week runs from the 6-12 September and is an initiative of the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN). Child protection experts will gather at SCH for a

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breakfast briefing on Monday 6 September to discuss ways to manage the long-term effects domestic violence has on children.

For more information on domestic violence prevention please visit: <http://napcan.org.au/>.

**The Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012 Personal Safety Survey.*

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Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick

Each year, Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick cares for more than 45,800 seriously ill and injured children from across NSW, Australia and beyond in a family-centred, multidisciplinary, expert environment. Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick is one the country's leading centres in paediatric clinical and research excellence and is part of The Sydney Children's Hospitals Network, the largest network of hospital and services for children in Australia.

For more information visit www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au