



Media Release

November 4, 2011

Southwestern Ontario Has Been Painted 'PURPLE'

St. Thomas, ON - The St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) and Elgin St. Thomas Public Health have joined the Southwestern Ontario region as one of the growing ranks in North America to have implemented the **Period of PURPLE Crying®** Program - an evidence-based infant abuse prevention program which educates parents and caregivers about normal infant crying and the dangers of shaking an infant.

"Too often we don't talk about the stress and frustration that can result from caring for a newborn, particularly a fussy newborn who cries a lot," explains Dr. Paul Kerr, Chief of Paediatrics at the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital. "This program demystifies some perceptions. Many parents and caregivers think they are the only ones with thoughts and feelings of extreme frustration when their baby is crying a lot - the reality is that it happens often and people need to talk about it and seek support for better outcomes."

Hospitals, through their maternity programs, reach many new parents in the community. Public health also forms long-standing relationships with new parents through community-based programs in prenatal, pregnancy, infant and toddler care. Through the collaboration of St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital and Elgin St. Thomas Public Health, we are able to reach the greatest number of new families with this education. "Elgin St. Thomas Public Health is pleased to be a part of this collaborative effort in the prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome," states Dr. Frank Warsh, acting Medical Officer of Health for Elgin St. Thomas Public Health.

The Southwest area has been planning a regional media campaign for the fall of 2011 to increase the profile of the **PURPLE** program through advertisements on billboards and radio. *Click for Babies*, a unique North American public awareness campaign is being organized and led by the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome and will be an integral part of increasing awareness. During this campaign, nurses at St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital, Family Centred Maternal Child Care Unit in partnership with Elgin St. Thomas Public Health will be distributing knitted purple baby caps to families with their copy of the **PURPLE** program.

Kelly Garrod, a Nurse on the Family Centred Maternal Child Care Unit at STEGH is the Hospital's site coordinator for this program. "We are very grateful for the support from the many groups and individuals who so generously donated their time and talents to knit purple hats for our babies. Each baby born at STEGH in November will be given one of these special hats to help raise awareness about this important program."

Shaken Baby Syndrome is caused by the violent shaking of an infant or young child and is preventable. Infants are at highest risk during the first few months of life, and research has shown that crying is the most common trigger to shaking. An education program for parents at the time of their child's birth can reduce the incidence of abusive head injuries. The program consists of an 11-page colour booklet and a 10 minute DVD that parents of newborns are to watch before leaving the hospital and then take home with them. The DVD is available in a variety of languages.

For more information visit: www.purplecrying.info

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