

News Release



University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania Health System

March 21, 2006

CONTACT: Kate Olderman
(215) 349-8369
kate.olderman@uphs.upenn.edu

Expert Advisory

Penn Experts Lead Assessment of State of Adolescent Mental Health Disorders

(Philadelphia, PA) - According to the National Institute of Mental Health, at least one in ten children in the U.S. suffer from a mental disorder severe enough to cause some level of impairment. To address this major public health issue, **Dwight L. Evans, MD**, Professor and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at the **University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine**, and colleagues from across the country assessed the state of scientific research on the prevalent mental disorders with onset between the ages of 10 and 22. Their collective findings were published in the award-winning book, *Treating and Preventing Adolescent Mental Health Disorders*, a project of the Adolescent Mental Health Initiative of the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands and the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania. The book received the 2005 Best Book in Clinical Medicine Award from the American Association of Publishers.

“We know that the majority of mental disorders begin during adolescence and continue into adulthood,” said Evans. “With the significant long-term impairment that can result from these mental disorders, early diagnosis, treatment, and prevention is critical to help adolescents achieve their full potential through adolescence and adulthood.”

The Adolescent Mental Health Initiative was the brainstorm of Kathleen Jamieson, PhD, Program and Center Director of the Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands and Walter and Leonore Annenberg Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center. This national initiative represents a major collaboration among Penn's Department of Psychiatry and Department of Psychology. The resulting book, aimed at health professionals, researchers, and policy makers, is a result of the work of seven scholarly commissions:

- Depression and Bipolar Disorder -- Commission Chair, Dwight L. Evans, MD, Penn
- Anxiety Disorders -- Commission Chair, Edna B. Foa, PhD, Penn
- Schizophrenia -- Commission Chair, Raquel E. Gur, MD, PhD, Penn
- Substance and Alcohol Abuse -- Commission Chair, Charles P. O'Brien, MD, PhD, Penn
- Positive Youth Development -- Commission Chair, Martin E.P. Seligman, PhD, Penn
- Eating Disorders -- Commission Chair, B. Timothy Walsh, MD, Columbia
- Suicide Prevention -- Commission Chair, Herbert Hendin, MD, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Each section thoroughly defines each disorder, assesses available treatments, discusses prevention strategies, and suggests a research agenda based on current knowledge of the conditions.

Details of studies of mental health disorders in adolescents are presented in each chapter. Findings include:

- The lifetime prevalence rate of major depressive disorder in adolescence is estimated to be about 15%, and another 10% of adolescents report clinically significant levels of depressive symptoms.
- Death by suicide is the second leading cause of death for college students and the third leading cause of death for ages 15 to 24.
- Over half of young people have used an illicit drug by the time they graduate from high school.

The second phase of the Initiative's effort consists of a series of books developed for parents of adolescents with mental

health disorders. These four books focus on depression and bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, and eating disorders. The books include information on warning signs, getting a diagnosis, treatments, coping mechanisms for home and school, prevention strategies, and advice from parents. The third phase consists of a series of books written for adolescent readers by individuals who have suffered from mental health disorders during adolescence.

“The prevention and treatment of adolescent mental health disorders is one of the major public health problems facing the United States,” said Evans. “Our goal with this book is to provide a comprehensive evaluation of what we know, and what we don’t know about adolescent mental health to create a road map for further scientific study and point the way toward needed changes in health and social policy.”

###

***PENN Medicine** is a \$2.7 billion enterprise dedicated to the related missions of medical education, biomedical research, and high-quality patient care. PENN Medicine consists of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (founded in 1765 as the nation's first medical school) and the University of Pennsylvania Health System.*

Penn’s School of Medicine is ranked #2 in the nation for receipt of NIH research funds; and ranked #4 in the nation in U.S. News & World Report’s most recent ranking of top research-oriented medical schools. Supporting 1,400 fulltime faculty and 700 students, the School of Medicine is recognized worldwide for its superior education and training of the next generation of physician-scientists and leaders of academic medicine.

The University of Pennsylvania Health System comprises: its flagship hospital, the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, consistently rated one of the nation’s “Honor Roll” hospitals by U.S. News & World Report; Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's first hospital; Penn Presbyterian Medical Center; a faculty practice plan; a primary-care provider network; two multispecialty satellite facilities; and home health care and hospice.

This release is available online at http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/mar06/Evansadlmntl.htm