



Media Release

CanTeen research examines the needs of young people who have a family member with cancer

Australia, 3 December 2009 – CanTeen – the Australian organisation for young people living with cancer – is developing measures to assess the needs of young people who have a parent or sibling with cancer.

CanTeen needs to recruit young people Australia-wide to take part in a survey as part of their project.

Dr Pandora Patterson, the national research and evaluation manager for CanTeen, says “Our research shows high levels of unmet needs and significant emotional distress for young people who have a parent or brother or sister with cancer. For example in our previous research, 90 percent of young people surveyed who had a parent with cancer reported needing help with issues related to their parent’s cancer, and approximately 50 percent scored high on emotional problems, signalling the need to see a psychologist to help them through this difficult time.

“We don’t yet have a health system that helps these young people navigate the distressing experience of cancer,” concluded Dr Patterson.

CanTeen strongly advocates the need to establish pathways to care for these young people within the health system. One of the first steps towards this is to develop context-specific measures that identify their unmet needs so timely services and resources are delivered.

“By taking part in this project by completing the survey, we will finalise the development of these measures, so that they can be used in the healthcare system and these young people can get the help and support that they so desperately need,” adds Dr Patterson.

Each year, more than 100,000 Australians are diagnosed with cancer and more than 40,000 people die from the disease. Young people with a parent, sister or brother who has been diagnosed with cancer wonder what impact it will have on them and where they can get support and help.



Media Release

Nineteen year old Amy explained, “When it’s not you suffering from the disease, it’s hard to express that you’re dealing with it too. You don’t want to feel like you’re trying to get pity from outsiders but you need support.”

“Cancer is increasingly moving toward being a chronic condition, placing more burden on family members than ever before. Our research shows that a cancer diagnosis in the family impacts on young people’s lives in many ways from falling behind at school to clinical depression,” said Dr. Patterson.

James, a 17-year-old whose mother died of cancer said, “some form of formal support should be strongly endorsed, if not compulsory, during and after cancer treatment of parents”.

To take part in an online survey which forms part of the research, young people between the ages of 12 to 24 who have a sibling or parent with cancer can go to <http://bit.ly/6ZcnGM> and follow the survey links or freecall 1800 234 007 for a survey to be sent out to you.

For more information see:

- The Offspring Cancer Needs Instrument (OCNI): Evaluation of an Instrument to Assess the Needs of Young People who have a Parent with Cancer - <http://bit.ly/7or1MN>
- The Sibling Cancer Needs Instrument (SCNI): Evaluation of an Instrument to Assess the Needs of Young People who have a Sibling with Cancer - <http://bit.ly/4n3mq1>

-Ends-

For media inquiries or to organize an interview with Dr Pandora Patterson, please contact:

Veronica Colvin - National Media & Communications Manager
CanTeen

Phone: (02) 8296 6305 Mb: 041 444 7022 Email: veronica.colvin@canteen.org.au

About CanTeen - The Australia Organisation for Young People Living with Cancer

CanTeen is the Australian Organisation for Young People Living with Cancer. CanTeen's Members are young people (12-24 year-olds) living with cancer, including cancer patients, brothers or sisters of cancer patients and young people with a parent or primary carer with cancer. CanTeen provides Members with a place where they can simply be young people - away from the adult dominated environment of cancer hospitals and treatment regimes. Through its camps and programs, CanTeen encourages its Members to get involved, make friends and have fun! In the words of our Members, the most effective form of support is from other young people in a similar situation - who have "been there, done that". For more information, please visit www.canteen.org.au