

MEDIA RELEASE

Canadian Mental Health Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WORKPLACE DANGERS

Edmonton, Alberta, May 1, 2000—

Workplace stress has become so prevalent in Canada that the annual Mental Health Week, May 1 - 7, has been dedicated to encouraging public action around the theme "workplace stress can throw you off balance."

In a nationwide survey, the Canadian Mental Health Association found that work was cited by 39% of Canadian adults as a source of serious stress. A consistent report by the Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health identified 40% of worker turnover due to stress and Statistics Canada recently reported that the annual loss of productivity lost to stress stands at \$12 billion dollars in Canada alone. These reports reinforce the World Health Organization's identification of job stress as a "worldwide epidemic."

A Harvard University study predicts that mental health problems and heart disease are emerging as the leading sources of work days lost through disability and premature death. Furthermore, companies now report psychiatric disorders as the leading cause of long-term disability. In 1999 the Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan identified psychiatric treatment by physicians as the fourth most prevalent procedure, costing the Plan more than \$47 million.

The Canadian Business and Economic Roundtable on Mental Health also reports that some of the world's leading companies are beginning to see mental health as a "strategic business issue where employers are discovering that improving the workplace environment is significantly less time-consuming and costly than recruiting, hiring and training new employees. Increased job satisfaction brings higher productivity and reduces turnover."

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"But individuals must also learn to cope with stress," advises the Canadian Mental Health Association, which offers 18 tips on how to avoid stress.

- ? Recognize the symptoms
- ? Use relaxation techniques
- ? Do essential tasks and prioritize others
- ? Get enough rest and sleep
- ? Talk with others about what is bothering you
- ? Get away - read a book or watch a movie
- ? Make the first move to be friendly
- ? Ease up on criticism of others
- ? Tackle one thing at a time
- ? Examine your lifestyle
- ? Exercise
- Watch your diet
- Do volunteer work
- Get physically active
- Give in occasionally
- Don't try to be perfect.
- Don't be too competitive
- Have some fun!

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For more information on workplace stress or Mental Health Week activities in your community, contact any local office of the Canadian Mental Health Association or the Alberta Division, at (780) 482-6576 [fax (780) 482-6348].