

**September 15, 2008**

**Hamilton Health Sciences, ON --**

**News Release**

### **High Rates of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Canada**

HAMILTON – On September 11, 2008 researchers from the Hamilton Health Sciences Anxiety Disorders Clinic published the first nation-wide study of civilian post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in Canada in the quarterly journal, *CNS Neuroscience and Therapeutics*.

Lead researcher, Dr. Michael Van Ameringen and his colleagues reported that 9.2 per cent of the Canadian population meets the criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at some point in their lifetime. This study also examined the frequency and types of traumatic events Canadians have experienced and found that 76.1% of the population has been exposed to at least one traumatic event.

The most common forms of trauma leading to PTSD were the sudden death of a loved one, sexual assault and witnessing someone badly injured or killed.

The rate of PTSD in this study was comparable to that found in the United States, and was much higher than expected by the researchers. These results are surprising, primarily because of the comparably low rates of violent crime in Canada, a small military and few natural disasters.

PTSD has become a global health issue. This disorder is characterized by emotional symptoms including re-experiencing the traumatic event, avoidance of reminders of the trauma, feelings of emotional numbness and feeling persistently anxious or on edge.

The condition often leads to a number of psychiatric disorders including major depression, alcohol and substance abuse. PTSD, along with its co-occurring psychiatric conditions, can result in a negative impact on the emotional, physical, occupational and social functioning of afflicted individuals and presents a significant cost to Canadian society.

The study concluded that, with such high prevalence of PTSD, it is paramount for Canadian primary care and mental health workers, as well as other front-line individuals, to become better equipped in recognizing and treating PTSD. The early identification of pre and post-trauma risk factors may influence the course and development of this disorder and decrease the societal burden.

More detailed results of this study can be found in the most recent volume of *CNS Neuroscience and Therapeutics*

-30-

**About Hamilton Health Sciences:**

Hamilton Health Sciences is a family of six unique hospitals and a cancer centre serving more than 2.3 million residents of Hamilton and south central Ontario. Our facilities -- Chedoke Hospital, Hamilton General Hospital, Henderson General Hospital, the Juravinski Cancer Centre, McMaster Children's Hospital, McMaster University Medical Centre and St. Peter's Hospital -- offer a range of acute and specialized services, catering to health care needs from preconception through to aging adults. Each site has specific areas of expertise and together, Hamilton Health Sciences is one of the most comprehensive health care systems in Canada. Through our affiliation with McMaster University's Faculty of Health Sciences, we are able to offer an academic environment where patients benefit from innovative treatments provided by some of the most talented medical professionals in the country. In addition to the Population Health Research Institute and the Henderson Research Centre, Hamilton Health Sciences collaborates with McMaster University to support robust research programs in a wide range of other fields including pediatrics, cancer care and digestive diseases. [www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca](http://www.hamiltonhealthsciences.ca)

**CNS Neuroscience & Therapeutics (formerly *CNS Drug Reviews*)** publishes original research papers, timely reviews and reports of novel findings of therapeutic relevance. The journal focuses on the neuroscience, phenomenology and pathophysiology, as well as pharmacologic and psychosocial therapeutics, of psychiatric and related disorders. Publishes quarterly.