

Study to help children traumatised by violence

Swinburne researchers are investigating the effectiveness of a treatment programme developed for children between the ages of 6 and 9 with fear reactions.

The treatment programme has been designed for children whose parents have separated, with the aim of reducing the negative psychological impact of a history of exposure to parental violence and conflict.

This research follows a 2004 report from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation estimating that one in four Victorian children has witnessed family violence and the study is funded by the Telstra Community Development Fund.

Professor Grant Devilly, from Swinburne's Brain Sciences Institute said that other research has identified an increased prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among children who have witnessed parental violence.

"These children are at great risk for developing PTSD. And while most children exposed to violence will not develop PTSD they can develop other problems such as anxiety, depression, anger, aggression and problems with concentration and school performance," he explained. He is currently looking to recruit suitable families for the study, where the child is displaying prolonged reactions following the termination of the parental relationship, stating that "we are offering a free research treatment programme for children who currently display fear reactions following an acrimonious separation".

The programme being evaluated incorporates therapeutic interventions directed at both the child, and one or both parents.

Interested families can call Fallon Cook or Marie Yap on (03) 9214 4762 for more information about the programme, or alternatively email FCook@swin.edu.au