

**CANADIAN MIRAGE STUDY CONFIRMS ROTAVIRUS AS SEVERE
GASTROINTESTINAL DISEASE FOR INFANTS WITH SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON PARENTS**

MONTREAL, Quebec – May 4, 2006 – Parents miss an average of 1.6 days of work to care for their child during a rotavirus episode according to a new Canadian study being presented today at the European Society for Paediatric Infectious Diseases (ESPID) medical conference in Basel, Switzerland. The study, **Measuring the Impact of Rotavirus Acute Gastroenteritis Episodes (MIRAGE)**, measures the burden of rotavirus on Canadians, a disease that peaks in April and May and affects virtually all children (95 per cent) before the age of five.¹

The MIRAGE study, one of the few to evaluate rotavirus in a community practice-based setting, not only examined the disease impact on young children and their families but also studied the impact on related health care resource utilization in Canada. Of the 54 per cent of patients who tested positive for rotavirus in the study, one in eight were hospitalized and one in four visited the hospital ER.²

“Most parents haven’t heard of rotavirus or are not aware of the potential severity the disease could have on their child and their family,” said Dr. John Yaremko, an investigator for the MIRAGE study group and assistant professor of paediatrics at McGill University. “Our study found that the child’s rotavirus was often not the only case of gastroenteritis in the family. In 47 per cent of cases at least one other family member experienced at least one symptom and in 55 per cent of these cases it was an adult.”

The MIRAGE study involved physicians in 60 clinics across Canada who recruited 421 children under the age of three who showed symptoms of vomiting and/or who had diarrhea; 395 children had their stools tested for rotavirus. The study occurred from January to June 2005, with the majority of rotavirus cases observed between February and May and peaked in April/May.

Rotavirus is the most common cause of severe gastroenteritis – an inflammation of the stomach and intestines – in infants and children between four and 36 months of age.¹ Rotavirus infection usually starts with fever, abdominal pain and vomiting, followed by diarrhea. These symptoms can be mild to severe and generally last for three to nine days with up to 20 episodes of diarrhea a day.^{3,4} Severe diarrhea and vomiting caused by rotavirus can lead to rapid and dangerous depletion of body fluids called dehydration, which can be life-threatening if untreated.⁵

“My daughter had diarrhea and was vomiting so much that she wanted to sleep on the floor in the bathroom,” said Pamela Lloyd, a Vancouver parent whose daughter Emily had rotavirus two years ago. “I didn’t know it was rotavirus, kids always get sick when they are young but this was the scariest experience I’ve ever been through with her.”

In addition to the economic burden of the disease and the impact of the severity of the disease, the study also examined the serotype distribution of rotavirus associated gastroenteritis in Canada. The study concludes that several different rotavirus serotypes were prevalent in Canada during the 2005 season, with the most prevalent G-serotype being G1. The study also concludes that there are seasonal variations in non-G1 serotypes.

Equally prevalent in the developed and developing world, rotavirus is highly contagious and does not discriminate – social class, hygienic measures or good nutrition do not appear to affect its prevention.

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MIRAGE study defines burden of rotavirus / 3

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- 30 -

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