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Media Violence Research Database

Free website offers searchable database of multidisciplinary studies on media violence

Boston, Mass. – Could your adolescent's aggressive behavior be related to the hours of video games he plays? Could your young child's anxiety and difficulty sleeping be connected with the TV she watches? Log onto www.cmch.tv/mentors/violence.asp and find out. Part of the official Web site for Children's Hospital Boston's Center on Media and Child Health (CMCH), www.cmch.tv, now offers a free, searchable database of research on how media affect children's health.

“Studies have shown that kids ages 8 to 18 spend over six hours each day using media—listening to music, playing video games, watching TV, and using the Internet” says Michael Rich, MD, MPH, director and founder of CMCH. “This research database allows parents, clinicians and educators to proactively find the effects of that media – it can be used as a tool to monitor a child's media exposure and help keep them healthy and safe.”

The website gives access to standardized abstracts and summaries of the more than 700 research articles since 1980 investigating the effects on children of violence in movies, video games, television, music, print, and the Internet.

“Violence is such a complex human behavior and entertainment media are so pervasive that their relationship has been examined by a wide range of academic disciplines. Our goal was to gather all of the studies in a single location and present them in a standardized form to create the first interdisciplinary library of research on media effects,” says Brandy King, MLIS, librarian for CMCH. “We chose violence as our first research topic because it is the most thoroughly investigated area of media effects.”

The process of compiling all peer-reviewed research articles on violence in the media took more than three years and spanned over 200 different journals. While building the database, King and colleagues cross-referenced the articles by authors and

keywords, both of which are hyper-linked, making it easier to navigate from study to study. The CMCH team also wrote a scientific abstract and a synopsis in lay language for every article so that both academics and parents had standardized overviews and findings on which to base decisions.

The database features a customized natural language search engine called “Smart Search.” Designed by King and SemanTx Life Sciences, “Smart Search” users type in their question and within seconds, a list of relevant articles is made available. “If a parent wants to know whether video games or television programs will contribute to violent behavior in their child, they can simply type their question into ‘Smart Search’ and find out,” says King. For example, if you type in, “How does playing violent video games affect my child’s behavior?” you get a list of 20 relevant articles. “This search engine allows people not familiar with keywords and search techniques to access high-quality scientific information and apply it to their own needs,” adds King.

“This is just the first step,” says Dr. Rich. “We are hard at work preparing the research associating media with overweight, sexual behavior, tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use, and a variety of health risk behaviors. Children’s high levels of media exposure and the health risks posed make it imperative that parents, teachers and doctors have the best possible information so that they can care effectively for children and teens of the Information Age.”

The Center on Media and Child Health at Children’s Hospital Boston studies media as an environmental influence that powerfully affects child health and behavior. In addition to the research database, the center’s website offers parents and educators tips and recommendations for properly educating children on the effects of media. For more information visit: www.cmch.tv . For regular updates of information, join the CMCH blog at cmch.typepad.com/cmch.

The Center on Media and Child Health (CMCH) is an interdisciplinary center of excellence in research, clinical intervention, and education on the effects of media on the physical, mental, and social health of children. CMCH makes research and tips for parents and teachers available at: www.cmch.tv.

Children's Hospital Boston is home to the world's largest research enterprise based at a pediatric medical center, where its discoveries have benefited both children and adults

since 1869. More than 500 scientists, including eight members of the National Academy of Sciences, nine members of the Institute of Medicine and 11 members of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute comprise Children's research community. Founded as a 20-bed hospital for children, Children's Hospital Boston today is a 347-bed comprehensive center for pediatric and adolescent health care grounded in the values of excellence in patient care and sensitivity to the complex needs and diversity of children and families. Children's also is the primary pediatric teaching affiliate of Harvard Medical School. For more information about the hospital and its research visit:

www.childrenshospital.org/newsroom

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