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EDITORIAL/OPINION

'Everyday problems' not always mental illness

By: Ron A. LaPointe

The tragedy that has struck the Boulos family is indeed sad.

Tragic though one death is, one must be careful not to jump on the "epidemic bandwagon." It is important to note that youth suicide rates have actually declined as much as 33 per cent over the past 14 years.

Slick marketing by big pharma with psychiatric ties have led us to believe that mentally diseased youth are climbing in epidemic proportions.

"Redefining" life's everyday problems as a mental illness lurking in our teenagers heads is a financial windfall. However, it is a dangerous road to travel.

TeenScreen (a U.S. program) is being pushed with the goal of screening all U.S.A. youth for mental illness. Advocates claim that it is simply to detect undiagnosed mental illness and provide necessary treatment, while critics say it is a program trolling for business by big pharma and the psychiatric profession.

Kids can have real problems. What they do not need are more drugs. The U.S. FDA has issued "black box" warning labels on psychiatric drugs -- as potentially causing aggression, mania, delusions, suicidal ideation, irrationality.

Any parent noticing odd behaviour in their child should immediately do a thorough investigation for street drugs and prescription psychiatric drugs.

It is vital to perform a complete physical exam with blood analysis to search for drugs or abnormalities and to rule out undiscovered physical causes --drug abuse, epilepsy, brain tumour, thyroid, hypoglycemia, head injury, infection, Wilson's disease, etc.

Confusion can often exist between a mental condition and a separate neurological condition (Health Canada).

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