



A Little “app” About Cancer, for kids

WICWC Activity workbook for children dealing with a family member affected by cancer, is now digital

Kirkland – June 12, 2017 – The West Island Cancer Wellness Centre (WICWC) is VERY excited to launch *A Little “app” About Cancer*, the digital version of *A Little Book About Cancer*. In October 2014, the WICWC launched the 40-page workbook aimed at elementary school children to help them cope with a close family member living with cancer. The workbook was the brainchild of Kasia Whitelaw, a student at McGill University whose mother was diagnosed with cancer (for the second time) when Kasia was only 6 years old.

“I was very young when my mother got cancer. I really didn’t understand what was happening and how my mother’s illness affected me. I have since come to realize that there is a need for children living with a family member affected by cancer to understand what the illness means to them, personally”, explains Kasia.

Over 6000 books were distributed in the Greater Montreal area. “The activity workbook was very well received but our goal was to get it in the hands of every child across Canada who is going through this. Going digital was not only logical due to logistics but many kids today are using tablets”, says Debbie Magwood, Founder and Executive Director of the WICWC.

A Little “app” About Cancer is exactly like the activity workbook in that it doesn’t set out to act as a guide to explain the disease but it includes 30+ pages of age-appropriate, colourful interactive exercises and allows kids to ‘let it all out’ and work through what cancer means to them.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, four to seven year--old children often believe their actions or thoughts are the cause to their parents’ cancer, whereas school---aged children develop feelings of anger, anguish, guilt and fear¹. The **app** aims at mitigating this undue stress.

According to Dr. Marc Hamel, Clinical Director, Couple and Family Therapist at the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), *A Little Book About Cancer* is a healthy outlet for children. The workbook is a way to allow them to express their anger and fears; and, equally important, for adults to open the lines of communication with their children about the subject.

“Parents are often scared to talk about cancer with their children because they want to protect them from experiencing pain,” says Dr. Hamel. “Children need to express how they feel about what is happening in the family. The Little Book About Cancer gives parents a means of engaging their children in a conversation about cancer and an outlet for the children to vent.”

Thanks to the generous support of Amgen, Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Merck and Novartis Oncology, the WICWC worked for several months with **appwapp**, a local company to develop the app.

For the first phase of the app launch, the centre is targeting the following in Quebec and Ontario: Oncologists/Hematologists, medical clinics, cancer related community resources and school boards. Eventually they hope to launch across Canada. The app is free.

To download the app:

iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/a-little-app-about-cancer/id1238851122>

Google Play: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.wicwc.cancerguide>

or visit the website wicwc.org

The West Island Cancer Wellness centre recently moved into their new Big Yellow House in Kirkland, Quebec after a yearlong \$3 million-dollar Capital Campaign.

¹L’enfant et l’adolescent face au cancer d’un parent 2013, Produced by Cancer J’Écoute, Canadian Cancer Society, Quebec Division, Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada,



About the West Island Cancer Wellness Centre

The West Island Cancer Wellness Centre (WICWC) is a registered charity dedicated to improving the health and well-being of people living with cancer by providing FREE programs and services created to address their emotional, physical and spiritual needs. This type of psychosocial intervention in cancer care supports and complements traditional medical practices.

Through our wellness programs, participants will receive personal support, gain coping mechanisms, discover additional alternatives, and become better educated about their specific illness. We will help them gain more control of their lives, find strength, reduce feelings of isolation, and continue to foster hope, regardless of the stage of their disease. They become empowered, active participants in the management of their health and well-being.

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