

The Mental Health First Aid Training and Research Program
www.mhfa.com.au *Orygen Youth Health Research Centre, University of Melbourne*

Summary

- Mental Health First Aid is an award winning training program for members of the public in how to support someone in a mental health crisis situation or who is developing a mental disorder.
- The program has solid evidence for its effectiveness from randomized controlled trials and qualitative studies. It increases knowledge, reduces stigma and, most importantly, increases supportive actions. It even improves the mental health of first-aiders.
- Mental Health First Aid training can assist in early intervention and in the on-going community support of people with mental illnesses. It is useful for people employed in areas which involve increased contact with mental health issues and for carers of people with mental illnesses.
- It is recommended that Mental Health First Aid training becomes a prerequisite for practice in certain occupations which involved increased contact with people having mental health problems, such as teachers and any emergency service personnel as first responders such as police, ambulance personnel and fire officers.

Overview of Mental Health First Aid Training

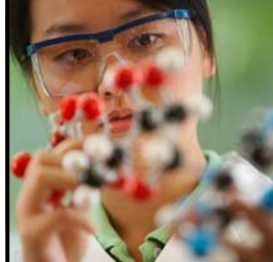
First aid training is widespread throughout the world to give members of the public skills to help an injured person before medical help arrives. However, first aid courses typically teach little or nothing about helping people with mental health issues. This is curious given how common these problems are. Most first-aiders would never get a chance to use their CPR skills, but they would have a good chance of having close contact with someone in a mental health crisis. We have data from a national survey of Australian adults showing that many people lack adequate skills in supporting someone they know who has a mental health problem (Jorm et al., 2005). Because of the need for training in this area, we developed the world's first Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course in Australia in 2001 (Kitchener & Jorm, 2002a). This course had its beginnings back in Canberra in June 1999 when we formed an Advisory Group to direct the curriculum of the MHFA course. The Advisory Group consisted of 3 mental health consumers, 2 mental health carers, 2 teachers, 1 psychiatrist, 1 mental health nurse, 2 first aid instructors (Red Cross) and two mental health researchers.

The MHFA course is a 12-hour course that is usually run over 4 X 3-hour sessions. At the end of the course, participants receive a Mental Health First Aid certificate. The course can be taken by any member of the public. Most participants choose to do the course for one of three reasons: their work involves people contact, they have someone close who is affected by a mental health problem, or they see it as their duty as a citizen to learn first aid skills. We emphasize that the course is not therapy and that it is not a substitute for getting professional help. However, it is useful for people who may have experienced a mental health problem but are currently functioning reasonably well. We also emphasize to participants that the course does not qualify them to be a counsellor, just as a conventional first aid course does not qualify someone to be a doctor or a nurse. Its role is to promote first aid—the initial help that is given before professional help is sought.



Professor Tony Jorm and Betty Kitchener

Rotary Clubs interested in holding a Mental Health First Aid Workshop please contact: Cheryl Deguara 02 8837 1900 or cheryldeguara@australianrotaryhealth.org.au



MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH GRANTS 2011

Dr Helen Stallman

Co Investigators: Dr James Bennett-Levy, Professor David Kavanagh & Dr Cameron Hurst
University of Queensland, Qld

Amount Awarded: \$69,947

A randomised trial of low intensity intervention model within a university health service to improve the mental health of students

Awarded in 2011



Dr Helen Stallman

Dr Peter Kelly

University of Wollongong, NSW

Co Investigators: Dr Frances Kay-Lambkin, Professor Amanda Baker & Professor Frank Deane

Amount Awarded: \$52,029

Improving co-morbidity treatment within residential substance abuse: A randomised trial of a computer-based depression and substance abuse intervention

Awarded in 2011

Professor Richard Mattick

National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre/University of New South Wales, NSW

Co Investigators: Professor Jakob Najman, Associate Professor Kypros Kypri, Dr Tim Slade, Dr Laura Vogl, Dr Delyse Hutchinson & Dr Raimondo Bruno

Amount Awarded: \$68,059

Young people, drinking and the parental supply of alcohol: a longitudinal cohort study

Awarded in 2011

Dr Nicola Reavley

University of Melbourne, Vic

Co Investigators: Professor Tony Jorm & Associate Professor Eoin Killackey

Amount Awarded: \$55,000

Guidelines for tertiary education institutions on how to support students with mental health problems

Awarded in 2011



Dr Peter Kelly

Dr Helen Stain

Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health, University of Newcastle, NSW

Co Investigators: Dr Leanne Hides, Dr Christopher Jackson, Professor Rhoshel Lenroot, Dr Georgie Paulik, Professor Amanda Baker & Professor Patrick McElduff

Amount Awarded: \$63,784

Improving social engagement of rural 'at risk' youth: A randomised effectiveness trial of a telephone delivered Cognitive and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy intervention

Awarded in 2011

Dr Elizabeth Maloney

University of New South Wales, NSW

Co Investigators: Dr Kristin Laurens & Dr Melissa Green

Amount Awarded: \$68,377

Identifying targets and timing for early intervention: A NSW population record-linkage study to detect childhood indicators of risk for mental illness

Awarded in 2011



Dr Helen Stain

MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH GRANTS 2011

Professor Frank Deane

Co Investigators: Dr Angela White & Dr Trevor Crowe
University of Wollongong, NSW

Amount Awarded: \$14,521

Family Connections: A randomised controlled trial of correspondence-based support for families of individuals recently diagnosed with psychosis

Awarded in 2009, 2010 and 2011

Dr Pamela Marsh

Co Investigators: Dr Robyn Langdon &
Professor Max Coltheart
Macquarie University, NSW

Amount Awarded: \$43,617

Remediation of mental-state reasoning and emotion recognition in schizophrenia:
Theoretical and clinical implications

Awarded in 2009, 2010 and 2011

Dr Eugen Mattes

Co Investigators: Professor Martha Hickey, Professor Ian McKeague & Professor Ezra Susser
University of Western Australia

Amount Awarded: \$39,702

Prenatal androgen exposure and its influence on mental health in children and adolescents

Awarded in 2009, 2010 and 2011

Dr Christopher William Lee

Co Investigators: Professor Peter Drummond, Professor Arnoud Arntz & Assistant Professor Joan Farrell
Murdoch University, WA

Amount Awarded: \$60,430

Multi-site randomised controlled trial of group schema therapy for borderline personality disorder

Awarded in 2011

Professor Ron Rapee

Co Investigators: none
Macquarie University, NSW

Amount Awarded: "in-kind"

Preventing anxiety and depression across childhood

Awarded in 2011

Professor Jeannette Milgrom

Co Investigator: Dr Charlene Schembri
Austin Health, Vic

Amount Awarded: \$66,369

Help-seeking for postnatal depression as a major public health problem: A Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial of Motivational Interviewing

Awarded in 2011

Associate Professor Anthony Harris

Co Investigators: Mr William Gye & Dr Marie Antoinette Redoblado Hodge
University of Sydney, NSW

Amount Awarded: \$64,629

Does cognitive remediation improve employment prospects for people with a mental illness returning to work?

Awarded in 2011



Dr Pamela Marsh



Professor Jeannette Milgrom



Dr Anthony Harris

MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH GRANTS 2011

A/Professor Jenny Bowman

Co Investigators: A/Professor Amanda Baker, A/Professor John Wiggers & Professor Vaughan Carr
University of Newcastle, NSW

Amount Awarded: \$23,300

Integrated smoking care linking mental health inpatients to community services: A randomised controlled trial

Awarded in 2009, 2010 and 2011



A/Professor Jenny Bowman

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS 2011

Colin Dodds Post Doctoral Fellowship

Dr Monique Robinson
Telethon Institute for Child Health Research/
University of Western Australia, WA

Amount Awarded \$75,000

Early life influences on child and adolescent mental health problems: A life-course approach to prevention and intervention

Awarded in 2011



Dr Monique Robinson

PAST POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

Study shows motherhood stress contributes to childhood mental disturbances

A recent study conducted by Murdoch Children's Research Institute is the first to quantify the ongoing risks of motherhood stress and parenting practices on children from infancy to preschool. The study, led by **Dr Jordana Bayer**, found that children exposed to high levels of harsh discipline or motherhood stress were more likely to suffer from mental health issues later in life. Consequences include friendship and learning difficulties, school dropout, alcohol and drug abuse, poor vocational outcomes, family violence and at times, suicide. The findings of the study will be used to develop family support programs to reduce behavioural and mental health problems in children.

Dr Jordana Bayer

Colin Dodds Postdoctoral Fellow 2007, 2008 and 2009

Royal Children's Hospital, Vic

Project Title: a combination of universal and targeted, versus a target approach to prevention of early childhood mental health problems: a population based cluster randomised trial



PAST MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

New treatment for anxious children

Many parents of children with anxiety disorders are unwilling or unable to access standard therapy for their child because costs are too high or the family is located far from a qualified practitioner. Between 2001 and 2003, Australian Rotary Health funded a study that showed promising results for an inexpensive yet effective treatment option. Led by **Professor Ron Rapee** of Macquarie University, the study looked at whether a commercial book and other written materials could help guide parents in helping their anxious child without consulting a therapist. Results of this study showed that parents who followed a 12 week written program and who received no direct contact with a therapist were successful in helping their children. 20% of families participating in the study reported their children were diagnosis-free and 50% said that they no longer required help at the completion of the study.

Professor Ron Rapee

Grant Given: 2001, 2002 and 2003

Macquarie University, NSW

Project Title: Parent-delivery treatment for anxious children



The importance of diet for good mental health in teens

Remember the saying that breakfast is the most important meal of the day? A study by **Dr Wendy Oddy** from the Curtin University of Technology has found that there's some truth in this old wives tale, especially in regards to adolescent mental health.

Dr Oddy has found that a high quality breakfast, with foods from at least three different healthy food groups, is linked with better mental health in 14 year-old boys and girls. And for every extra food group eaten, the teenagers' associated mental health score improved.

Surveying over 800 teenagers what they ate for breakfast, Dr Oddy's research team scored the teens based on their intake of the core food groups. Mental health was also assessed using a detailed questionnaire.

While research had already shown that students who eat breakfast pay more attention in class, retain more information and are more interested in learning, this was the first study to show that variety of breakfast foods is also important.



Dr Wendy Oddy

Grant Given: 2007

Curtin University of Technology, WA

Project Title: Dietary factors and trajectories of mental health for infancy and adolescence

Medicare's Better Access is working for mental health

In late 2006, the Australian Government introduced a set of mental health reforms known as Better Access. The initiative was introduced in response to low treatment rates for common mental disorders and was designed to improve the outcomes for people with such disorders by encouraging a multi-disciplinary approach to their mental health care.

A recent study, conducted by **Professor Jane Pirkis**, Director of the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne, has found that Better Access is showing positive results for both psychologists and their clients. The study showed that 77% of surveyed psychologists believed the introduction of the Medicare scheme had positive impacts for them, with 85% of surveyed clients reporting a range of positive effects on their health and wellbeing as a consequence of receiving treatment.

Professor Jane Pirkis

Grant Given: 2007, 2008 and 2009

Melbourne University, Vic

Project Title: An evaluation of the new Medicare Benefits schedule psychologist item numbers: Impacts and psychologists and their patients.



PAST MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

Study finds drugs do help children with ADHD

Researchers have shown that children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) do benefit from the medication clonidine.

With funding from Australian Rotary Health Professor Philip Hazell and Dr John Stuart from the University of Newcastle showed that clonidine reduced aggressive behaviour in children with ADHD, and produced fewer unwanted symptoms than standard medication alone.

Findings from this study were used to provide GP's with the scientific evidence to support their clonidine prescriptions. Results were also used to challenge critics who argued against the drugs' safety and effectiveness.

Professor Philip Hazell

Grant Given: 2000 and 2001

University of Newcastle, NSW

Project Title: Clonidine plus psycho stimulants for ADHD and behaviour problems



New hope for sufferers of mental illness and substance abuse

Mental health issues are peaking, with one in five Australian adults experiencing mental illness in any one year. Unfortunately, many people with severe mental illness also suffer from substance use disorders, compounding their mental health problem and making treatment difficult.

Professor Frank Deane has recently evaluated a program that offers residential treatment for people with dual diagnosis. He has found that live-in programs that provide specialist treatment for individuals with co-occurring substance use and mental problems results in a significant improvement on both symptom and recovery measures. Prof Deane's evaluation is being used as a benchmark to help improve service offerings and to highlight the need for additional aftercare services to help patients further recover their quality of life.

Professor Frank Deane

Grant Given: 2007 and 2008

University of Wollongong, NSW

Project Title: 'Endeavour House': Evaluation of a residential program for people with psychiatric and substance use disorders

Young people benefit from active participation

A recent study conducted by the Inspire Foundation in New South Wales has evaluated a youth participation program in an effort to understand the role of participation in promoting mental health and wellbeing in young Australians.

Dr Phillipa Collin, lead author of the study, suggests that the study's initial findings show that the youth participation model used at the Inspire Foundation is positively contributing to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing in young people involved in the program.

The findings of this evaluation have been directly fed to the Inspire Foundation to inform reviews of culture and practice at the organisational and service delivery level. Initial findings are already shaping the implementation of the youth participation model with a view to strengthen the outcomes for young people.

Dr Phillipa Collin

Grant Given: 2009

Inspire Foundation, NSW

Project Title: Meaningful participation as a means of promoting the mental health and wellbeing of young Australians: An evaluation of Inspire's youth participation program



PAST MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH GRANT RECIPIENTS

New treatment for cardiac patients suffering from depression

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Australia. It accounts for approximately 34% of all deaths each year and kills one Australian every 11 minutes.

One of the main contributing factors to early death from cardiovascular disease is the lack of appropriate healthy behaviours in afflicted patients. Behaviours surrounding diet, exercise and depression affect the outcome for cardiovascular patients who are at increased risk of a subsequent cardiac event and death. These patients are the priority for preventive cardiology.

A recent study conducted by Victoria's Heart Research Centre and led by **Dr Marian Worcester** has shown that cardiac patients who engage in cognitive behaviour therapy during rehabilitation are more likely to modify their risk behaviours and in so doing, reduce their risk of a recurrent cardiac event.

Dr Worcester's program is currently being introduced to cardiac rehabilitation practitioners who will incorporate some of the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy into their standard cardiac rehabilitation programs. Patients will soon be able to access the program online, as part of a group format, or through their cardiac practitioner.

Professor Marian Worcester

Grant Given: 2006, 2007 and 2008

Heart Research Centre, Vic

Project Title: Prevention and movement of depression in-patients after an acute cardiac event: Randomised controlled trial of a cognitive-behavioural intervention



New program for parents of children with autism

Between 2006 and 2007, Australian Rotary Health funded a study led by **Professor Matt Sanders** from the University of Queensland to evaluate the effectiveness of a parenting program for parents of children with autism.

The program was designed to strengthen families' capacity to support a child with a disability, develop practical solutions for common and potentially stressful behavioural and developmental challenges, and help contribute to a balanced, meaningful and fulfilling life at home and in the community.

Findings indicate that the program is a promising intervention for parents of children with autism. Parents reported significant improvements in their child's behaviour and significant positive changes in their own parenting style and satisfaction with their role as a parent.

Professor Matthew Sanders

Grant Given: 2006 and 2007

University of Queensland

Project Title: An evaluation of the Stepping Stones Triple P Parenting Program with parents of a child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Finding out how families can help prevent suicide

Almost 20% of deaths among Australians aged 15-24 years are attributed to suicide. Regrettably, little research has been done into finding effective treatments for teens that have already attempted suicide.

Researchers Jane Pineda and **Professor Mark Dadds** have found that intervention efforts which focus on addressing family issues and fostering resilience are highly beneficial. In a recent study they concluded that families who received treatment using an outpatient, time-limited, structured and family-focused intervention saw a reduction in adolescent suicide behavior, psychiatric disability, depression and hopelessness.

The study also showed a significant improvement in family functioning. These findings will be used to stimulate a change in practice when dealing with young people who have attempted suicide.

Professor Mark Dadds

Grant Given: 2006

University of NSW, NSW

Project Title: A randomized trial of a Family Intervention program for Young People with Suicidal Behaviour

