



Building capacity in primary mental health care research and evaluation

The *diamond* Launch

The University of Melbourne's Department of General Practice has received a share in \$1million for depression related research from the *beyondblue* Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression and Related Disorders announced by Victoria's Minister for Health, Ms Bronwyn Pike, on 18 May 2004. Ms Bronwyn Pike recently named the *diamond* project as one of 16 successful applicants for the 2004 *beyondblue* research grants.

The *diamond* Consortium will build on an already established National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) funded investigation into the management of depression in Australian general practice.

Leading the group is Associate Professor Jane Gunn, working with colleagues in the University's Department of General Practice and collaborative partners from St Vincent's Mental Health, Monash, La Trobe, Newcastle and Adelaide Universities, Royal District Nursing Service, Key Centre for Women's Health in Society and General Practice Divisions Victoria.

Associate Professor Gunn says "there is considerable controversy about how readily depressed patients are diagnosed by their GP and how effective management is in the general practice setting. Around 60% of patients seen in general practice with depression will fully recover and remain well. The remainder will experience persistent and relapsing depression and there is only limited knowledge about what happens to this group."

Diagnosis, Management and Outcomes of Depression in Primary Care – a longitudinal study

The *diamond* project hopes to shed light on these vital questions. The researchers also aim to provide patients experiencing depression with a chance to have a say about the health care they receive. Associate Professor Gunn says "*diamond* brings together a network of researchers, clinicians, policy makers and consumers with a single goal. The aim is to create an evidence base on which to build a primary care system that promotes emotional well-being and provides Australians experiencing depression with accessible, responsive and effective management options to assist their recovery and maintain well-being."

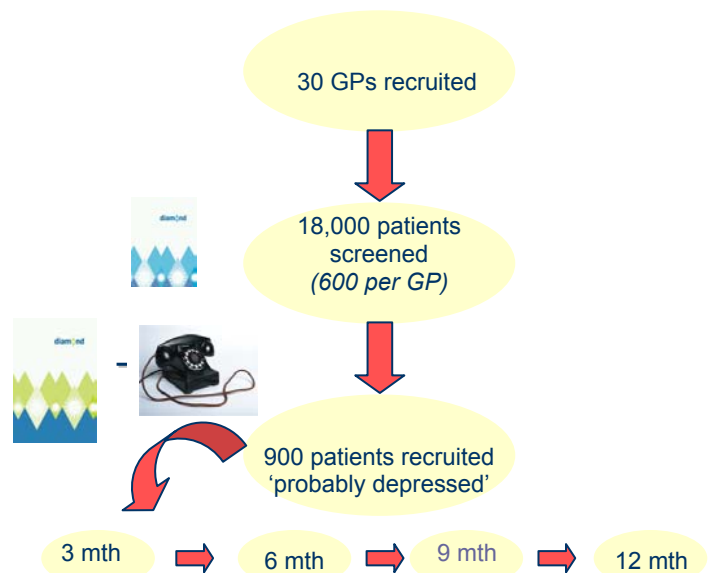
"We have a strong focus on the system of primary care – one which is currently not well documented. Indeed, as a Nation we have no policy on what the primary health care system is or should be." She says the researchers hope their research will be able to contribute evidence and further this debate.



DIAMOND Consortium: (left to right) Dr Heather Rowe (*Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, University of Melbourne*), Dr Kelsey Hegarty (*Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne*), A/Prof Jane Gunn (*Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne*), Dr David Pierce (*Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne*), Bronwyn Pike (*Minister for Health*) Ms Leonie Young, (*CEO beyondblue*), Dr Jane Fisher (*Key Centre for Women's Health in Society, University of Melbourne*), A/Prof Michael Kyrios (*Department of Psychology, University of Melbourne*), Dr Grant Blashki (*Department of General Practice, Monash University*)

The team will assess the experiences and attitudes of both GP and patient in the care and treatment of depression and will include 600 randomly selected patients from each of 30 randomly selected general practices in urban and rural Victoria, including a mix of bulk-billing centres, private clinics, male and female doctors and those with a deeper interest in mental health. See study design below.

If you would like further information about the project please contact Maria Potiriadis on (03) 8344 9719.



About the *diamond* Consortium

The *diamond* (Diagnosis, Management and Outcomes of Depression in Primary Care) Consortium formed in 2004 with a vision towards a primary care system that promotes emotional well-being and provides Australians experiencing depression with accessible, responsive and effective management options to assist recovery and maintain well-being. The role of the *diamond* Consortium is to facilitate the open exchange of information and sharing of resources. The Consortium is developing and implementing a coherent and integrated research plan that will build upon the work of the *diamond* longitudinal study. The Consortium is also committed to nurturing the careers of young researchers and research students in the area of mental health research in the primary care setting. Above all the Consortium will promote a community of researchers with a strong element of mentorship.



Media Corner

GP mental healthcare research boost

by **Edwina Light**
GP mental healthcare and training is set to benefit after beyondblue, the national depression initiative, allotted more than \$1 million to depression-related projects.

Researchers at Monash and Melbourne universities last week were among 16 recipients of funding through beyondblue's research program, the Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression and Related Disorders.

The Monash University project will examine GP psychological skills training and its effect on patients and clinical outcomes.

It will also look at the training offered to GPs under the federal government's Better outcomes in mental health care initiative.

The group will work with the University of Melbourne department of general practice, which is undertaking a longitudinal study on GP mental health diagnosis, management and patient outcomes.

This study will consider GP characteristics such as training and attitudes to mental health, as well as health system issues such as GP consultation times, referral networks and local mental health resources.

Professor Ian Hickey, beyondblue clinical adviser and chair of the Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression and Related Disorders expert committee, said that research into the treatment of mental health at the general practice level had been limited in the past.

"Research has often been limited to specialist centres, neglecting the fact that most people are treated in general practice or other non-specialist settings," he said. **MO**

Study to aid GPs in treating depression

A University of Melbourne research project called the DIAMOND will share its Victorian Government funding of \$1 million for depression-related research.

The funding will support an integrated research program of depression in primary care, including a national health, life, behavior, and

as one of 16 successful applicants for the 2008 "Supportable" Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression and Related Disorders research grants.

The research network will include an already established national funded

agreement of depression in general practice. Leading the group is

Sturt, working with the Institute of Health Services Research at the University

Department of General Practice and Collaborative Partners from St Vincent's

and Newcastle Universities. A national reference group

will then be constituted to provide ongoing support and

mentoring for the research network. The group will also

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Dr Tere Dawson, PhD, is the Senior Project and Policy Coordinator of the Health Issues Centre, Melbourne. She has a qualification in social sciences with Masters and PhD degrees in sociology and anthropology, as well as a Master of Public Health.

Dr Dawson has an extensive research background and has published widely. Her work in the area of primary care has included research on the treatment of depression in general practice and the treatment of mental illness amongst people living with HIV/AIDS.

She has also worked in the areas of women's health and ethnicity. Dr Dawson has worked at La Trobe University, at Deakin University and at the Department of Human Services.

Since commencing work with the Health Issues Centre, Dr Tere Dawson's primary responsibility has been her work in primary health care, general practice integration and the Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) projects.

PCPs are an initiative of the Department of Human Services to strengthen the relationship and capacity of primary care agencies. The engagement of consumers is a key initiative of this Strategy.

As well as providing support to PCP agencies, Tere has conducted a range of research examining consumers' views of PCPs, and the role of community health centres' management boards in relation to community participation.

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Primary Care Evidence-Based Psychological Interventions (PEP)

Congratulations to Dr Grant Blashki and Prof Jeff Richards at the Department of General Practice, Monash University on their success in receiving a consortium grant of \$300 000 over three years for the Primary Care Evidence-Based Psychological Interventions (PEP) Collaboration.

"This study is an opportunity to better understand which psychological interventions can be integrated into general practice, how best to train GPs, whether patients benefit in terms of objective clinical measures, how consumers and carers experience care provided by their GPs, and how GPs interact with mental health specialists and make appropriate referrals," said Dr Grant Blashki.

The project involves researchers from several organizations including the *diamond* collaboration based at the University of Melbourne, King's College London, the Mental Health Council of Australia and the University of New South Wales. <http://www.monash.edu.au/news/monashmemo/stories/20040526/beyondblue.html>

diamond Consortium Member Profile

Name: Dr Tere Dawson (PhD)
Occupation: Senior Project and Policy Coordinator Health Issues Centre, Melbourne



Tere Dawson has qualification in social sciences with Masters and PhD degrees in sociology and anthropology, as well as a Master of Public Health. Tere has an extensive research background and has published widely. Her work in the area of primary care has included research on the treatment of depression in general practice and the treatment of mental illness amongst people living with HIV/AIDS. She has also worked in the areas of women's health and ethnicity. Dr Dawson has worked at La Trobe University, at Deakin University and at the Department of Human Services. Since commencing work with the Health Issues Centre, Dr Tere Dawson's primary responsibility has been her work in primary health care, general practice integration and the Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) projects. PCPs are an initiative of the Department of Human Services to strengthen the relationship and capacity of primary care agencies. The engagement of consumers is a key initiative of this Strategy. As well as providing support to PCP agencies, Tere has conducted a range of research examining consumers' views of PCPs, and the role of community health centres' management boards in relation to community participation.

Look for Diamond in the rough times

By Rachel Kleinman

IN FOOTBALL-mad Melbourne, it sometimes takes an AFL player's involvement to help a cause hit the headlines.

How then footballer Nathan Thompson's tale of his battle with depression has done just that.

But in reality, depression affects thousands of Melburnians, sports star or not.

Melbourne University associate professor Jane Gunn is leading a new study called DIAMOND (Diagnosis and Management of Depression), after receiving funding from the Victorian Centre of Excellence in Depression.

She said more information was needed about how general practitioners treated depressed patients and whether those measures worked.

Professor Gunn, who is a practising GP, said the study would examine how the wider community dealt with depression.

"Rather than recruiting patients from specialist psychological practices or psychiatric settings, we will look more at the general population," she said.

Patients from 30 general practices across Victoria will be invited to participate.

"We are interested in the role GPs play from a patient's perspective," Professor Gunn said.

The study will look at what medication GPs prescribed, who they referred patients on to and whether they recommended books and support groups.

For more information on DIAMOND, contact Maria Potiriadis at Melbourne University on 8344 9719.

Do you have any research or best practice you want to share with us?

Contact: Maria Potiriadis, University of Melbourne, Department of General Practice, 03 8344 9719 or m.potiriadis@unimelb.edu.au

