



Building capacity in primary mental health care research and evaluation



DIAMOND CONSORTIUM LAUNCH Friday 4 February 2005

Consortium Members...a note for your diaries!

The diamond Consortium will be officially launched on Friday 4th February 2005. Please keep the afternoon free from 1pm onwards. Further details coming soon...

diamond-PEP Workshop Report: Consumers & Carers in Research

A joint *diamond*-PEP workshop on Consumers & Carers in Research was held on Monday 25 October 2004. Chaired by Dr Grant Blashki, the focus of the day was meaningful engagement of consumers in health care research. Speakers included Sandy Robinson from the National Resource Centre for Consumer Participation in Health gave an overview of consumer participation, principles, ethical issues, definitions, and participatory models, Ingrid Ozols of blueVoices (beyondblue) spoke candidly from a consumer perspective of participation in research, Dr Kathy Griffiths from the Centre for Mental Health Research, Australian National University presented the group with an invaluable organisational perspective and finally Tere Dawson of the Health Issues Centre at Latrobe University spoke about practical methods of involving consumers in research.

Prior to lunch the workshop concluded with a panel discussion entitled 'where to from here?' Panel members consisted of the morning' speakers as well as researchers. Emerging discussions centred around ensuring consumers are representative for the field of research, barriers to involving consumers in research, how to best care for consumers for whom involvement might be challenging, and where we hoped consumer participation might end up in the future.

Participants highlighted that for them the workshop emphasised the importance of involving consumers and carers in research, provided different methods of recruiting and selecting consumers, and finally that the day provided them with a wealth of resources and information.



LEFT - Tere Dawson (Health Issues Centre, La Trobe University)
RIGHT - Left to right: Stephanie Brown (Mother & Child Health Research Centre), Ruth McNair (Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne), Jane Fisher and Heather Rowe (Key Centre for Women's Health in Society).

The NH&MRC Statement on Consumer and Community Participation in Health and Medical Research can be found at www.nhmrc.gov.au

Identifying Depression in Elderly District Nursing Clients

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the devastating effects of depression on the lives of many elderly people. Risk factors such as deteriorating health, cognitive decline, social isolation and stressful life events contribute to the high prevalence of depression and associated disorders in this age group. A recent study of elderly Royal District Nursing Service (RDNS) clients found that 38% had symptoms of depression however only 10% were receiving care for their condition.

Unfortunately, identifying depression in elderly people can be extremely difficult. Firstly, as a result of the stigma attached to mental illness, many elderly people are reluctant to discuss their emotional concerns with healthcare professionals. In addition, it is often difficult to disentangle medical from mental health problems in this age group. Finally, many people in the community, including the elderly themselves, hold a fatalistic belief that depression is an inevitable consequence of growing old.

District nursing organisations such as RDNS, that serve vast numbers of the elderly living in the community, are potentially in an ideal position to identify and facilitate appropriate intervention for depression.

With the support of seed funding from the *diamond* Consortium, the RDNS Helen Macpherson Smith Institute of Community Health is conducting a study on the feasibility of district nurses routinely screening for depression in their elderly clients. The study is managed by RDNS Researcher, Russell Nunn, in collaboration with fellow Consortium members, Dr. Jane Sims (University of Melbourne) and Prof. Merylyn Annells (a joint appointment by LaTrobe University and RDNS).

The study, which commenced in November 2004, involves the participation of the nursing staff at a single RDNS Centre and their elderly clients. Immediately prior to the delivery of an education session on depression and the use of the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS), the nurses complete a questionnaire on their knowledge and attitudes towards depression. This is followed by a three-month implementation phase in which the nurses routinely screen their elderly clients for depression using the GDS. Clients who screen positive for depression receive a detailed assessment by an RDNS Mental Health Nurse and a referral to the client's doctor or a specialist mental health service may be arranged if required. Finally, a post-implementation questionnaire will be administered to obtain the nurse's views on the feasibility of routinely screening their clients for depression.

It is hoped that the results of the study may lead to higher rates of identification and better management of depression in a group of people whose depression frequently remains unrecognised and untreated. Completion of this study will also help to pave the way for a possible large-scale clinical trial of a community-based intervention program for elderly clients with depression within a district nursing environment.

Russell Nunn, Researcher, RDNS
Helen Macpherson Smith
Institute of Community Health



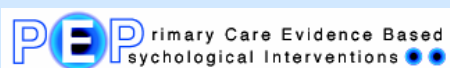
Forthcoming Events

Visiting academics for 2005

The diamond Consortium is pleased to announce that it will be hosting **Professor Christopher Dowrick**, Professor of Primary Care at the University of Liverpool, UK and recent author of 'Beyond Depression: a new approach to understanding management. (Oxford University Press)'. Professor Dowrick will be in Melbourne between 12-26 February, 2005. He has research interests in Depression in primary care and community settings, and unexplained physical symptoms in primary care. Details of a Consortium workshop that will be hosted by Professor Dowrick will be circulated to members shortly.

Mental Health Economics

Likewise, the Consortium is also pleased to be hosting Dr Dan Chisholm (King's College London, UK) who will be facilitating a health economics workshop for diamond Consortium Members in 2005. Dr Chisholm is a health economist for the Global Program on Evidence for Health Policy, World Health Organization. His work has primarily been in the comparative cost effectiveness of interventions for reducing the global burden of addictions and mental illness. Dr Chisholm will be in Melbourne between the 5 to 22 April 2005 and based at the Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne. Details of the workshop will be circulated to members early in the new year.



The Primary Care Evidence Based Psychological Interventions (PEP) project has had an exciting first year with some successes, some valuable lessons learnt, and some contribution to mental health policy debate.

Successes include retrospective analysis of questionnaires for 422 CBT trained GPs, a pilot of simulated patient consultations videotaped before and after training in Metropolitan Melbourne, and piloting of the PEP patient outcome tools in the North West Melbourne Division.

Lessons learnt include an appreciation of GP and Division reluctance to be randomised to training and non-training groups, the subtleties of achieving reliable video rating assessments, and the variability of GP counselling skills before entering CBT training.

PEP has contributed preliminary data to both the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration, and to the Evaluation of the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care initiative.

In the first half of 2005, the comprehensive randomised controlled trial will be underway in the Gippsland region incorporating videotaped simulated patient consultations undertaken in *GPs' practices*, with substantial financial and QA incentives for GP participation.

Dr Grant Blashki
Department of General Practice, Monash University

Do you have any research you want to share with us?

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