

AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



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beyondblue: the national depression initiative

- National, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related disorders in Australia
- Five priority areas:
 1. Raise awareness & decrease stigma
 2. Prevention & early intervention programs
 3. Encourage consumer & carer participation
 4. Improve training & support for primary carers (e.g. GPs)
 5. Targeted research.
- Australian Government committed \$23.2 million over four years to *beyondblue* to provide additional services and support targeted at men as part of its 2010 Election Commitment- *Taking Action to Tackle Suicide - Targeting men who are at greater risk of suicide- but least likely to seek help*

beyondblue Doctors' Mental Health Program (bbDMHP) - Aims and objectives

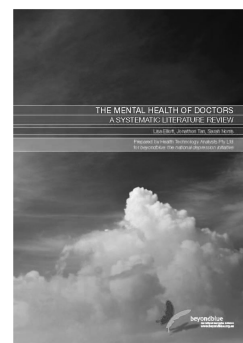
- bbDMHP aims to address the prevalence of depression and anxiety among Australian medical students and practitioners
- Key objectives:
 - increase awareness of symptoms
 - identify risk factors
 - reduce barriers to help-seeking
 - promote existing services and develop self-help resources.

bbDMHP – Governance Structure

- Advisory Committee
 - Chaired by Dr Mukesh Haikerwal AO, former AMA president
 - Informs strategic directions of bbDMHP
- Expert Reference Group
 - Consumers and carers
 - Deans of medical schools
 - Academics/content experts
 - Medical specialist colleges
 - Doctors' health advisory services
 - Medical Board of Australia
 - Defence medical organisations

bbDMHP - Systematic literature review (SLR)

- Targeted research – *beyondblue* priority area
- First activity of bbDMHP
- Reviewed existing research relating to mental health of:
 - medical students
 - medical practitioners
- Builds on and extends previous research



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SLR key findings - Prevalence

- Depression & anxiety disorders common
- Alcohol use - lower compared to the general population
- Higher rates of prescription drug use
- Higher suicide rate compared with the general population:
 - female doctors – 146% higher risk of suicide
 - male doctors – 26% higher risk of suicide

bbDMHP - Future work

- Profession-wide mental health survey of Australian medical students and practitioners examining:
 - prevalence rates
 - risk factors
 - helps-seeking
 - impact of mental illness
- On-line mental health and wellbeing program
- Education and awareness campaign

Suicide in Australia

- Suicide is the principal cause of death among Australian young people (leads causes of death by injury, significantly exceeding fatalities from motor vehicle accidents and homicides);
- In Australia suicide leads causes of death by injury, significantly exceeding fatalities from motor vehicle accidents and homicides. In 2009 there were 2,132 suicide deaths, approximately 75% involving males (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2009).
- For complex reasons, Australian suicide rates from 2002 to 2007 were 30-40% under-reported. These continuously upwardly adjusted rates are still significantly under-reported.

Suicide in Australia - Issues

- Taboo surrounding the public discussion of suicide'
- Suicide prevention being underfunded, under-coordinated and under-researched compared with physical disorders and with estimated need
- Young people's low service attendance and treatment participation rates, and effectively identifying, assessing and managing their risks when they do.
- Lack of staff knowledge about self-harm, poor patient-staff communication, sub-optimal post-discharge follow-up, and knowledge of and access to services, all contribute to this.

Suicide in Australia – Issues (cont.)

- Poor service provider communication with each other and family/carers is a frequent theme in stories of suicide
- Doctors in emergency departments may focus solely on the physical at the expense of the emotional
- Pervasive myths about suicide
 1. There is nothing we can do if someone is determined
 2. Those who talk about it don't do it
 3. We should not talk about it or it will give people ideas

Suicide prevention initiatives in Australia

- National Suicide Prevention Strategy
 - provides the platform for Australia's national policy on suicide prevention with an emphasis on promotion, prevention and early intervention for mental health
 - Four key inter-related components:
 - **The Living Is For Everyone (LIFE) Framework**, which sets an overarching evidence based strategic policy framework for suicide prevention in Australia
 - **The National Suicide Prevention Strategy Action Framework**, which provides a time limited work plan for taking forward suicide prevention investment and leverage
 - **The National Suicide Prevention Program (NSPP)** is the Australian Government funding program dedicated to suicide prevention activities.
 - **Mechanisms** to promote alignment with and enhance state and territory suicide prevention activities.

Suicide prevention initiatives in Australia

- Suicide Prevention Australia
 - non-profit, community organisation which is the peak body within the suicide prevention sector
 - brings together diverse interests across disciplines, practitioners, researchers, and the community affected by suicide and self harm
 - role in providing policy advice to governments, community awareness and public education, in research
- Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention
 - Located at Griffiths University in Queensland
 - World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Suicide Prevention
 - Conducts research in all aspects of suicide prevention and manages the Queensland Suicide Register.

Suicide prevention initiatives in Australia

- Lifeline (13 11 14)
 - 24 hour telephone service providing access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services
 - Also provides national services and campaigns that promote emotional wellbeing, encourage help seeking, and address suicide prevention and awareness.
- Suicide Call Back Service (1300 659 467)
 - Provided crisis counselling to people at risk of suicide, carers for someone who is suicidal and those bereaved by suicide, 24 hours per day 7 days a week across Australia.
- Kids Help Line (1800 551 800)
 - Free, private and confidential, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25

Suicide prevention initiatives in Australia

- Mensline (1300 78 9978)
 - Telephone and online support, information and referral service, helping men to deal with relationship problems in a practical and effective way
- Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (1800 011 046)
 - Specialised, free and confidential Australia-wide service providing counselling and group programs to Australian veterans, peacekeepers and their families