

## Primary Mental Health Care in New Zealand

Information about developments in primary mental health care, particularly those led by the Ministry of Health.

**August 2008**

The primary mental health care team is progressing work on several fronts including: policy and service development, workforce development and e-therapies. Two achievements are discussed in more detail below.

### **Launch of *Best Practice Guidelines for the Identification of Common Mental Disorders and Management of Depression in Primary Care***

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) and the New Zealand Guidelines Group have launched best practice guidelines aimed at improving primary health care services' assessment of common mental disorders and management of depression. The guidelines identify primary health care services and general practices as being the places where, with appropriate resourcing, common mental disorders can, and should, be managed.

The guidelines recommend that first-line treatment for an adult with mild depression should be active support, advice on exercise and self-management, and referral to psychosocial helping agencies as required (for example, relationship counselling). First-line treatment for an adult with moderate depression should be either an antidepressant or a 'talking' therapy. The guidelines also include recommendations for managing depression in young people/rangatahi and consider special issues for mental disorders in the perinatal period and in older adults. They encourage the use of screening and assessment tools when targeting groups who are at a higher risk of developing mental disorders but do not advocate universal screening at this time.

The guidelines were launched at the annual conference of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners by Dr David Chaplow (Director of Mental Health), Steve Caldwell (Chief Executive of the New Zealand Guidelines Group) and Professor Tony Dowell (Professor of Primary Health Care and General Practice at the University of Otago and chair of the Guideline Development Team).

A range of projects are currently being developed to increase uptake of the guidelines and to aid implementation of the guidelines' recommendations. Hard copies of the guidelines are available from Wickliffe on phone: 04 496 2277, order numbers: HP 4597 (full); HP 4619 (summary). The guidelines are also available online via <http://www.nzgg.org.nz> (the New Zealand Guidelines Group) or <http://www.moh.govt.nz> (the Ministry).

### **Extra Funding for Primary Mental Health Care**

The Ministry has allocated an extra \$9 million to primary mental health care for the 2008/09 financial year. This funding will be used to establish primary mental health care initiatives in the primary health organisations (PHOs) that have not yet received dedicated funding from the Ministry and to increase the equity of funding across PHOs. By early 2009, all 80 PHOs should have established primary mental care health initiatives targeted at people with mild to moderate mental and/or addiction disorders.

If you would like further information on any of the primary mental health care team's activities, please feel free to email Dr Sarah Dwyer at: [sarah\\_dwyer@moh.govt.nz](mailto:sarah_dwyer@moh.govt.nz)