

The National Depression Initiative Campaign: media briefing notes for meeting with John Kirwan on 1 March

Background information

The National Depression Initiative is part of the Government's response to suicide prevention. \$6.79 million was approved by Cabinet over the five-year period July 1 2004 - 30 June 2009 for the public health campaign.

Depression is the most common mood disorder in New Zealand. One in six New Zealanders will experience a major depressive episode during their lifetime¹. In the last 12 months, 5.7 percent have experienced such an episode. Over a third of those who experienced a mental disorder in the last year have more than one disorder, with mood and anxiety disorders commonly co-occurring. A clear association exists between an increasing number of disorders and suicidal behaviour, especially suicide attempts.

The National Depression Initiative campaign: an overview

Research and development work was completed during 2005, including consultation with stakeholders. Research looking at international experience found that successful campaigns included strategies to reduce stigma and discrimination against people with experience of a mental illness. New Zealand is fortunate to have had the *Like Minds Like Mine* campaign in place now for seven years, and in that time surveys have shown encouraging changes in terms of people's understanding of mental illness and acceptance of people with experience of mental illness.

Health education resources have been distributed, including brochures and posters for the general public, and for primary health care providers. An 0800 Helpline (0800 111 757) managed by Lifeline, and an information website at www.depression.co.nz have been available since the campaign was launched. Lifeline receives an average of 175 calls a day when the ads are on air, dropping to 56 when they are off air.

The Mental Health Foundation is leading the co-ordination of on-the-ground activities in support of the campaign, including work being carried out by mental health promotion workers around the country, public relations and communications activities. Radio advertisements targeting Maori went to air in December 2006, and new radio advertisements for young people are being developed alongside an interactive website for young people, to be launched in July this year.

New primary mental health services being developed and delivered by about 40 PHOs around the country also support the aims of the National Depression Initiative campaign, as will the development and implementation of new guidelines for primary health care providers on depression.

John Kirwan's contribution to the depression campaign has been significant, and initial feedback from pre-testing results are confirmed by a national survey showing 78% of those surveyed recalled the advertisements, and of these 98% were positive about them. Both the survey and 0800 helpline callers have identified his personal honesty and openness as a key factor in the success of the campaign.

¹ Oakley Browne MA et al, *Te Rau Hinengaro: The New Zealand Mental Health Survey*. Ministry of Health 2006.