



News Release

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.



Tuesday, February 17, 2004

Feeling Blue? Talk to your GP

Fewer than half of the many Australians who experience depression seek help, which is why General Practitioners and *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* have launched a new television community service announcement.

The message from the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) and *beyondblue* is that depression is common and that effective treatment and recovery is possible.

Almost 1 in 5 Australians will experience depression in their lifetime but less than half will seek treatment and only 15 per cent currently receive an evidence-based medication or counselling treatment. Of those who seek help, 75 per cent consult their family doctor. Most people nominate their GP as the person from whom they would first seek help for emotional difficulties.

“There is still an alarming gap between the size of the problem in our community and those who are willing to seek any help,” Professor Ian Hickie, Clinical Advisor to *beyondblue* said today.

“Unnecessary delays in seeking treatment lead to increased pressure at work and on families. Instead of seeking treatment many people increase their alcohol, drug and cigarette use. The ongoing adverse effects on their physical and mental health are substantial,” he said.

“It is vitally important that we work with family doctors to overcome barriers standing in the way of people with depression and anxiety seeking help. That is why *beyondblue* and ADGP have collaborated to produce this important community service announcement.”

ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters said GPs delivered the majority of mental health services in Australia.

“Depression is the second most common illness managed in general practice, and it often exists alongside other chronic physical illnesses,” said Dr Walters.

“As a GP, I see many people who come to me as their first port of call, but often it is the people close to them who make the first approach. GPs can provide individuals and families with information and advice about mental health and can work with other health providers to address problems early, co-ordinate care and provide support,” said Dr Walters.

ADGP (www.adgp.com.au) is the peak national body representing the 120 Divisions of General Practice in Australia. Over 95 per cent of GPs are members of a local Division.

beyondblue (www.beyondblue.org.au) is the national program designed to increase community awareness of depression, support depression prevention research and encourage people to seek effective forms of health care.

NOTE FOR TV STATIONS: You will receive the CSA by satellite Monday February 16. The key number for the 30 second announcement is ADGP-2/30R, and for the 15 second commercial, ADGP-2/15.

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