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News Release

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

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NEW PSYCHIATRY SUPPORT SERVICE IS GOOD NEWS FOR GPs

The Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) says a new service providing all Australian GPs with access to specialist psychiatric advice is a much needed support in the acute care of mentally ill patients.

“GPs have long called for better communication and timely access to psychiatrists’ advice,” said ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters.

GPs deliver the majority of mental health care in Australia – more than 75 per cent of those who seek help for a mental health problem see a GP first.

“Until recently, we have been relatively unsupported,” said Dr Walters. “It is concerning to GPs when they are presented with an acute patient and the next appointment with a psychiatrist is weeks, if not months away.

“This service is a national first. It will provide GPs advice from psychiatrists within 24 hours.”

The service is funded by the Australian Government as part of the *Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care* Initiative.

“Better Outcomes is a world-leading initiative that provides Australia with an ideal basis on which to build a sustainable primary mental health care system,” said Dr Walters.

“Our research with GPs and Divisions tells us that GPs want the *Better Outcomes* program expanded, particularly in the area of increasing access to specialist support for GPs,”.

ADGP is working closely with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists to develop some specific options to improve communication and collaborative care between GPs and psychiatrists.

To access the service, GPs can call 1800 200 588 or email secure site, www.psychsupport.com.au. South Australian GPs should call (08) 8179 1707 or email upasa@sadi.org.au.

ADGP is the peak national body representing 120 Divisions of General Practice across Australia and was established in 1998. About 95% of GPs are members of a local Division of General Practice.

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