

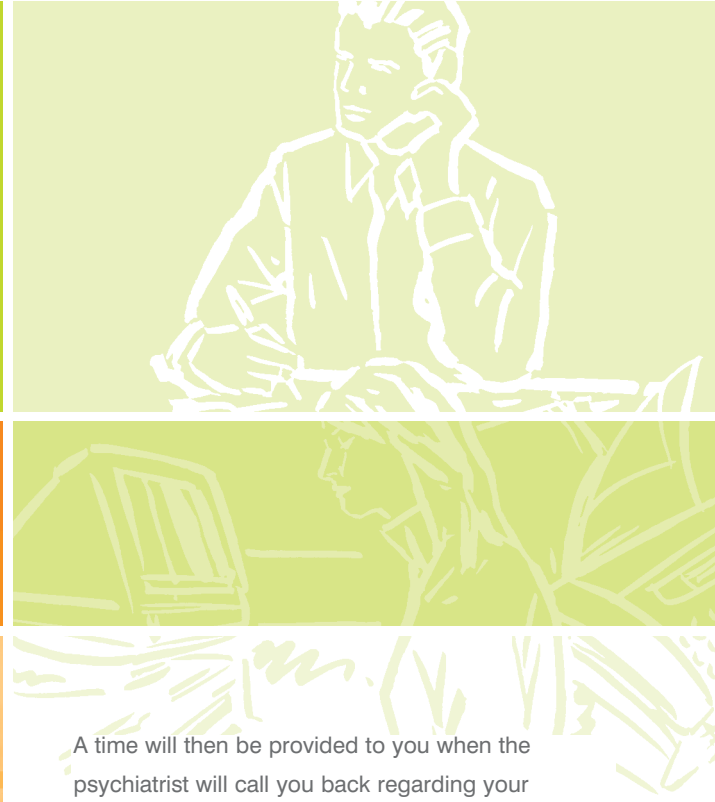
## Newsletter September 2004

Welcome to the first edition of the GP Psych Support Newsletter. The aim of this newsletter is to provide you with information that will answer questions you may have about the GP Psych Support Service – we hope you find the information helpful.

We are very pleased to report that in the 6 months since GP Psych Support has been operating, feedback from GPs who have used the service has been very positive. Many have expressed that the service is most valuable and useful support in their day to day practice and there are quite a few GPs who have used the service several times. In this edition we provide some examples of the types of questions you can ask the service. Remember, no question is too complex or too simple!

### What happens when I contact GP Psych Support?

**Phone:** When you phone **1800 200 588** your call will be answered by a Mental Health Professional. You will be asked some very brief details on your patient's age, gender and level of risk and then asked what your question is for the psychiatrist e.g. depression management.



A time will then be provided to you when the psychiatrist will call you back regarding your question. A fax of the advice discussed will be sent to you for your patient records.

**Fax:** A fax back form is available through the phone service. Alternatively, you can send a fax to **(02) 9425 3879** on your own letterhead stating your question for the service, however, we do ask that you include the patient's level of risk. Depending on the complexity of your question a psychiatrist will either fax back an answer or they may choose to phone you if they feel it easier to discuss the advice by phone. In either option a fax of the advice discussed will be sent to you for your patient records.

**Email:** You can email a question to a psychiatrist via the **www.psychsupport.com.au** website. The website is secure so you will require a username and password first. To obtain a username and password call **1800 026 965** or complete the registration form at the back of this newsletter and fax to **(03) 9804 0402**. Once you log on to the website you will need to provide some patient details and then your question. You will be able to view the reply from the psychiatrist in your psychsupport.com.au inbox within 24 hours. You can print your question and the psychiatrist's reply for your patient records.

**Whether you choose phone, fax or email a psychiatrist will reply to you within 24 hrs.**

# Psychiatrist Profiles

The psychiatrists employed for the GP Psych Support service have been selected based on their understanding of general practice and the pressures and constraints in which GPs practice.

When you make contact with the service you will be informed of the name of the psychiatrist providing you with advice. The role of the psychiatrist is to provide advice only. Primary responsibility for patient care remains your responsibility.

The GP Psych Support service has contracted psychiatrists from around Australia. Dr Stephanie Bradstock and Dr Elizabeth Scott are just two of the psychiatrists providing advice for the GP Psych Support service. Their backgrounds and interests are provided below.

## **Dr Stephanie Bradstock**

Stephanie trained in general practice before entering psychiatry. She has been working at the Clinical Research Unit for Anxiety and Depression, at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney for a number of years. She works as a consultant psychiatrist on the inpatient unit and is involved in medical student teaching through the University of New South Wales. She has also worked briefly as a consultant psychiatrist in Darwin. Her interests include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for anxiety disorders and depression, and computerised delivery of CBT. She has also facilitated some SPHERE training sessions – both in Level 1 introductory and CBT.

## **Dr Elizabeth Scott**

Elizabeth works as a consultant psychiatrist in Sydney. She is a founding member of the SPHERE Project, a national education program for general practitioners in common mental health disorders. She has been involved in the development and publication of educational materials for use by GPs and their patients in the treatment of depressive and anxiety disorders. Elizabeth has an interest in mood disorders and women's health problems. She has a long research record including current research in the area of depressive disorders in later life, brain imaging and early-stage breast cancer.

## What types of questions can I ask of the GP Psych Support service?

No question is too trivial or too complex to ask of GP Psych Support. If you can wait 24 hours for the psychiatrist's advice then the situation you are enquiring about is appropriate. To date GPs have asked questions on a variety of disorders ranging from depression and anxiety to obsessive compulsive disorder, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. The questions have also varied in complexity and have included GPs asking for confirmation of their proposed treatment plan, requests for advice on changing medication dose or class, confirmation of a diagnosis and suggestions for non-pharmacological treatments.

**If a patient requires immediate emergency or crisis counselling or you cannot wait 24 hours for a psychiatrist to contact you then the GP Psych Support Service is not appropriate for your situation and you should refer to your local acute psychiatric emergency service. GP Psych Support is not a referral service and does not provide information on mental health services in your local area.**

## Consumer Consent

The issue of obtaining consumer consent is important to consider when seeking advice from GP Psych Support.

GPs are encouraged to seek consent from their patients prior to accessing advice from the GP Psych Support psychiatrists.

## Examples of questions you could ask GP Psych Support

- I have a patient who suffers from depression who has been taking SSRI anti-depressant medication for 6 weeks and is not responding. Should I wait longer, increase the dose, or change the anti-depressant?
- I have a patient with anorexia and a BMI of 15. How forceful should I be about getting her into an inpatient unit for specialised treatment. She doesn't want to go.
- I have a patient who has presented with schizophreniform psychosis but is also very lethargic and sleeps well. Which antipsychotic should I start the patient on?
- I have a patient with severe anxiety who refuses all medication, due to apparent side effects, what are my treatment options? I've taught the patient slow breathing and relaxation techniques with some benefit.
- One of my patients has been on antipsychotic medication for 2 weeks. Though acute symptoms have settled patient still hallucinates and is restless at night. Does medication need to be added or changed to get better control of symptoms?

## Feedback from GPs who have used the service

"It's accessible, they get back to you. It fits into my modality of practice too, its time efficient."

"It's a very good service because they respond within 24 hours... send you a fax of the discussion, so there's documentation... you can put in the patient's file."

"You just simply email them; give them a brief outline of the patient's story... you get quite detailed advice back from the psychiatrist."

## This newsletter has been brought to you by McKesson and Educational Health Solutions

### **McKesson**

McKesson provides call centre operations focussed on the delivery of telephone triage, mental health services and disease management programs. McKesson has offices based in Australia and New Zealand and provides the phone and fax arm of the GP Psych Support service.

### **Educational Health Solutions**

Educational Health Solutions (EHS) is an Australian medical education company that has been producing educational and disease management materials for the Australian medical community for the past six years. 'SPHERE: a national mental health project' is an ongoing EHS training program.

EHS has extensive experience in website development. EHS is based in Melbourne and provides the email arm of the GP Psych Support service.

## Registration Form

Please photocopy this form if you would like to register multiple doctors.

Date  /  /  Have you used the psychsupport service before?  Yes  No

If you require advice about a patient for whom you have previously accessed advice via the phone/fax service you must return to that service for that patient.

Name	<input type="text"/>	Verification (Office use only)
Practice Address	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	Postcode <input type="text"/>
Email Address	<input type="text"/>	
Practice Phone	<input type="text"/>	Provider Number <input type="text"/>
Username (Office use only)		Password (up to 15 characters)
		<input type="text"/>

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