



News Release

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Mental health and alcohol: Managing the mix

A national project aimed at helping general practitioners and their practice teams to treat people with co-existing alcohol misuse and mental health problems has been launched in Adelaide today.

The project, *Your Mental Health and Alcohol: Managing the Mix*, was launched by Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing Christopher Pyne at the Adelaide Hilton, Victoria Square.

The project is coordinated by the Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP), the peak national body representing divisions of general practice which support GPs and their practice teams to deliver health care to local communities throughout Australia.

Nineteen projects covering 33 divisions of general practice will be funded to lead the projects, which will combine education, resources and enhanced systems of care to improve patient outcomes and better support GP teams.

ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters said the *Managing the Mix* project recognises the important role that GPs and their teams play in identifying and treating alcohol misuse and common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, which frequently occur together.

Dr Walters said alcohol and mental health problems are often interconnected, and it is very common for people with a substance misuse problem to also have a mental health condition.

"Most people see their GP at some point during the year, so GPs can play an important role in helping people at-risk," he said.

"Alcohol is the most commonly misused substance, but since alcohol is legal, people may think of it as benign, but it can have a negative impact on your mental health as well as your physical health. As a depressant, alcohol can negatively affect people's feelings, and can even be a factor in suicide.

"Under this initiative, GPs will receive the latest education to help enhance their skills and consumers will benefit through newly-created resources and information.

"GPs will also be able to work with their peers and other allied and specialist health care providers to ensure better coordinated and supportive care."

The launch was part of a national workshop, *Managing Alcohol and Mental Health in Primary Care*, which featured presentations and discussion forums from experts in the substance misuse and mental health fields.

The Alcohol Education and Rehabilitation Foundation is the principal funding body of this initiative. Funding has also been received from the Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

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