



NEWS RELEASE

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

3 January 2006

GPs and the Divisions Network must play a major role in building a strong mental health service system

The Australian Divisions of General Practice welcomes moves by the Australian Government to reform and improve mental healthcare services across the country. Mental health has become an important government and community priority.

Kate Carnell, ADGP CEO said "in developing strategies to address this problem, it is important that solutions are long-term, team-based, whole-of-government and intersectoral.

"To build a strong overall system of care for people with mental health disorders and problems and their families we must:

- engage and support general practitioners and general practice in partnership with other health care professionals such as psychologists and community pharmacists
- invest seriously in quality care and early intervention in the primary health care setting
- integrate primary and specialist systems of care.

"One of the major problems in the mental health system is the high rates of relapse and readmission into mental health facilities – the revolving door syndrome.

"General practitioners and the Divisions Network have the capacity to play a major role in stopping this revolving door scenario.

"Firstly, people with a mental health illness **must** be linked to a general practitioner of their choice prior to discharge from an inpatient facility. For the best outcomes, GPs should be involved in discharge planning as well as ongoing patient management planning."

Programs such as Better Outcomes in Mental Health, involving GP training, a 3 step treatment plan and access to allied health services, have been very important in early diagnosis and treatment.

Ms Carnell said "The role of the GP in coordinating a treatment plan is fundamental in stopping relapse but other aspects of the patients life need support as well."

Ms Carnell added "ADGP has recommended in its submission to the Australian Government Mental Health Inter-departmental Committee that a "community coordinator" program be funded at a cost of \$35.4million over four years.

"This would involve a regional network of community coordinators based in divisions to link people leaving hospital and community mental health services with their GP, employment and housing and other social supports, working across Commonwealth-State and private sectors.

"If mental health patients have a well coordinated health care plan and support with managing other important aspects of life, such as employment and accommodation, the chance of relapse and readmission will be greatly reduced.

"A continued and expanded investment in mental health care at the primary care level is essential if people are to get better and lead productive lives and if we are to reduce admissions and readmissions to limited mental health services."

For more information please call Kate Carnell, ADGP Chief Executive Officer, on 0415 662 266.

Telephone 02 6228 0800

Facsimile 02 6228 0899

Email adgpreception@adgp.com.au

