

House

Newsletter of
the Community
Consultative
Committee of the
IDGP



Call

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The Illawarra Division of General Practice (IDGP) is an organisation which supports and represents General Practitioners. It was developed to provide opportunities for GPs to work with their local colleagues, consumers and other health or community services. It aims to achieve wider health improvements in the community.



IDGP Community
Committee

Editorial

The range of services and support for people and families affected by cancer testifies that much help is at hand. Sally Tortorici reports on this in her article 'Cancer Support and Information'.

Mental health is again in the spotlight as consumers stand to benefit from the new mental health item numbers which cover the preparation of a mental health care plan and referral to a psychologist or appropriate counsellor for up to 12 sessions per year under Medicare. headspace Illawarra draws attention to the need for accessible integrated mental health care services for our young people. The SESIAHS mental health recovery orientated service, Fernhill, makes the attainment of recovery goals, initiated by the consumer and supported by family, and staff, central to maximizing their clients potential to live a meaningful life following a mental illness.

Carers are invited to join in a national conversation about the ethics of caring in a good society and so provide information to guide strategy and planning around this important role.

Word of the issue may not be found in your old dictionary but describes a new phenomenon: cyberchondria which describes using the internet to gather information on health or health care. One fears that it may sometimes take on some of the characteristics of its close relative hypochondria.

Patricia Noferi, Editor, House Call

headspace Illawarra

A large regional consortium headed by the Illawarra Division of General Practice and working with agencies such as Southern Youth and Family Services has been awarded \$1.5 million to develop an integrated network of mental health services for young people in the Illawarra - headspace Illawarra. The funding body is the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing which funded ten headspace centres across Australia.

Nationally, the Illawarra is recognised as having a high teenage suicide rate, an extremely high youth unemployment rate and tragic levels of alcohol and drug use by young people. Many of these young people do not visit GPs.

The headspace Illawarra model will include a general practice for young people aged 12-25, as the Hub of the network. The Hub will include GPs, psychologists, lifestyle, sexual health and counselling services but will be backed up by an array of community service providers in the fields of legal service and advocacy (Illawarra Legal Centre), rehabilitation (Wollongong Crisis Centre and the Salvation Army) and accommodation (Southern Youth and Family Services) to name a few.

headspace Illawarra with the enthusiastic support of the Department of Education and Training, will also operate in high schools as students, other young people, general practitioners, teachers and Lifeline openly discuss the importance of seeking help when confronting drug, alcohol or mental health problems. headspace Illawarra informs parents and their children about the special problems young people experience through local media including PRIME and WAVE FM. Carers support other parents or carers in distress through programs established by the Salvation Army.

These are early days yet in the development of this exciting project. When services are established more information will be forthcoming.

'Who Cares?' Project – NSW Carers Australia

Uncertainty exists about the current caring scenario where unpaid family members provide the bulk of care for people of all ages who have a chronic illness, a disability, a mental illness or who are frail aged.

The proportion of the population aged 65 years or more by 2045 will be roughly double the present proportion of the population in that age cohort so that more Australians will require assistance. It is a world wide trend that there will be an ageing population and an aged carer population.

Against this background, Carers NSW seek to learn:

'What ethical challenges might we as a society face to meet the changes in the needs of both those being cared for, and those who do the caring?'

The St James Ethics Centre's role in this project is that of independent researcher. They propose that the ethics of caring in a good society will be explored in a national conversation asking questions about:

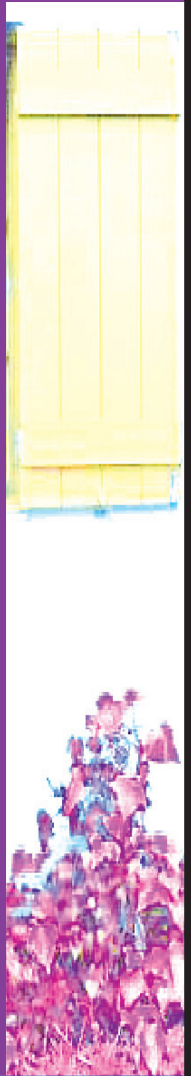
- What is a good society?
- What is caring?
- Who is responsible for caring?

- What does caring look like in a good society?

The research will be conducted during the next eighteen months. The first stage of the research comprises a series of fifty focus groups conducted throughout Australia. Participants will include a diverse range of people and groups including current and former carers, the corporate and small business sectors, and media; public and private health and disability sectors, government and NGOs providing services to carers; ethicists and doctors.

Both religious and secular perspectives will be sought as well as perspectives of those with varying cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. Online input to the questions will also be sought from all Australians who will be able to access the questions on the St James Ethics Centre website.

Information adapted from Background to 'Who Cares?' Project at www.carersnsw.asm.au and www.ethics.org.au



Bringing a Recovery Focus to Mental Health Rehabilitation

The new strategic plan for SESIAHS Rehabilitation Services promotes recovery in mental health. For some time now we at Fernhill Place Rehabilitation Service at Fairy Meadow have been looking at ways we can best assist our consumers with their own personal recovery journeys.

But what does recovery actually mean? Anthony, (1993) defines recovery as: "A deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and / or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying hopeful and contributing life. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of psychiatric disability".

Hope is an essential factor for recovery. It is not about a cure it is about recovering what may have been lost, e.g. sense of self, dignity, rights, an ability to be part of decision making processes. It is about non – stigma, the promotion of positive values about people with mental health problems and fostering a sense of belonging in the community.

At Fernhill Place we offer a recovery orientated service to our consumers that they might

maximise their potential and live a meaningful life. Recovery is unique for each individual therefore it is essential that recovery goals are initiated by the consumer and related to the hopes and dreams that they may have for themselves. We recognise our consumers as 'experts' who must be active participants in their own care.

Every consumer who attends our service is linked to a key rehabilitation worker who will assist them to develop a 'tailor made' recovery plan. We strongly encourage input from carers, family, treating doctors and any significant other that the consumer nominates to be involved in their recovery journey. Fernhill also offer recovery focused groups such as Healthy Living, Relapse Prevention and Building Confidence for Employment.

Want to know more? Why not give us a call on 42852140 we can assist you with general information about our service and how you can make a referral. We look forward to hearing from you.

Gaye Richardson
Team Manager / Fernhill Place Rehabilitation.

Mental Health Program

Many people are now aware of the new Mental Health Item Numbers (known as the Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative) which were made available through Medicare in November last year. There certainly has been demand for information from our local GPs on these new item numbers and how best to implement them!

From a consumer's perspective, there are several points to note:

- The development and implementation of a Mental Health Care Plan is central to the management of most mental health complaints, particularly depression and anxiety. This means that the GP takes a detailed history, both medical and social, and also asks questions about the patients' feelings and responses, which may include a brief questionnaire asking similar questions. These questions help the GP determine the severity of the mental illness and plan the best course of action for management and recovery. A Mental Health Care Plan is valid for twelve months (from the date of the Mental Health Care Plan's instigation)
- One of the actions that may come out of a Mental Health Care Plan is referral to a Psychologist or another type of Counsellor (eg Social Worker, Occupational Therapist). Patients are entitled to a maximum of twelve consultations to such services a calendar year (Jan - Dec), but must go back to their GP after six consultations for a review of their Mental Health Care Plan. It may be that the GP will recommend the patient continue with their visits to the counsellor, or decide to manage the patient's condition in another way. Patients should be aware of the fees charged by these services - there is a Medicare rebate,

but there will be a "gap" payment not covered by Medicare or Health Funds. The size of this "gap" is dependent on the fees charged by the service.

- If you are already seeing a Psychologist, you can only access this process through your GP. Only Psychologist consultation fees charged after the Mental Health Care Plan consultation fee from your GP has been claimed through Medicare will attract a Medicare rebate under the Better Access to Mental Health initiative.
- Medicare does not collect information on who has been charged one of these Mental Health Item Numbers, apart from the purposes of paying the rebate. Personnel at your general practice are required by law to keep patient information confidential. If you are at all concerned about your privacy being breached, please talk to your GP about this.

It is strongly recommended that you see your own GP for the development and management of a Mental Health Care Plan, as he or she will already have a lot of the information they need in your health record and will hopefully have a relationship with you that is reassuring and helpful.

Janette Ellis -
Mental Health
Program Officer



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Cancer Support and Information

A diagnosis of cancer can have a devastating impact on an individual and their family. This year nearly 32,000 people in NSW will be diagnosed with cancer; of these over 60% will survive the disease due to advances in diagnosis and treatment. Reliable, expert support and information is crucial to those newly diagnosed and their families. People often feel that their health professional is too busy to provide them with the answers to their questions, and the internet can be a confusing maze of information of sometimes questionable reliability.

The Cancer Council NSW is the leading cancer charity in NSW and provides support and information to people with all types of cancer and through all stages of the cancer journey:

- The Cancer Helpline 13 11 20 is operated by oncology health professionals and takes 22,000 calls a year in NSW. The nurses and social workers on the line can provide information, advice and support and provide links to other services. This service is available to patients, families, friends, health professionals and the community.
- The Cancer Council NSW has a range of printed information about cancer called the Understanding Cancer series. These booklets and brochures are available free of charge anywhere in NSW through the Cancer Helpline 13 11 20, or through local oncology clinics, community health centres, council libraries and some medical practices.
- Cancer Council Connect is a one-to-one peer support service where newly diagnosed patients can be linked up over the phone to a volunteer who has had a similar cancer diagnosis. Volunteers are trained by The Cancer Council NSW to provide support to those newly diagnosed as they undergo treatment.
- The Cancer Council NSW also has a range of Telephone Support Groups that run on a fortnightly basis. This service is cost free and two oncology health professionals facilitate each group. Currently groups are operating for advanced cancer, lung cancer, brain cancer, young women with breast cancer and young men with prostate cancer, as well as Telephone Support Groups for carers, parents and for bereaved.
- The Understanding Cancer Program is a one-day cancer information day for people newly diagnosed and their families. Topics covered include, cancer treatments, practical issues such as transport, financial assistance and home care, coping strategies and self care to name just a few. These programs are held in the Illawarra. Information is available on the Helpline 13 11 20 to learn when the next program will run.
- For people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, The Cancer Helpline is available in five other languages and The Cancer Council NSW has a range of publications available in many other languages. The Understanding Cancer Program is also held in other languages. Call the Helpline 13 11 20 to be put in touch with a multicultural health worker who can provide advice, support and information.

If you have been diagnosed with cancer, or you care for someone who has, there is reliable, expert support and information available. To be sent information, be linked to local support services such as support groups, or just to speak to an expert, call the Cancer Helpline on 13 11 20.

Sally Tortorici RN, RM

Regional Programs Coordinator at The Cancer Council NSW Southern Regional Office Wollongong (02) 4225 3660.

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)

A fee-free telephone interpreting service for medical practitioners and specialists in private practice is available in order to help provide better access to health care for certain non-English speaking people. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, through TIS provides a fee-free telephone interpreting service to help doctors communicate with their non-English speaking patients. The Doctors Priority Line provides prompt telephone interpreting services.

Call 1300 131 450, twenty four hours a day, 7 days a week anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call.

Contacts: Enquiry Line phone (02) 6264 1777,
Email: tis.enquiry.line@immi.gov.au
Website: www.immi.gov.au/general/doctor/index.htm

