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BLACK DOG INSTITUTE REACHES OUT TO HELP MORE SUFFERERS OF MOOD DISORDERS

The Black Dog Institute continued to set new benchmarks in 2006 as demonstrated by the fact its website has reached an average of 100,000 hits per month.

During the last calendar year, the website recorded nearly a 70 percent growth in website activity (www.blackdoginstitute.org.au) and the figure is climbing.

This growth is across all streams of activity that comprise Research, Clinical Services, Education and Training as well as Consumer and Community where a strong effort is being made to help offset the impact of the drought on rural communities.

“Our activity across these various streams of activity are inter-dependent with each other – clinical observation shapes research hypotheses, while research findings are filtered back into clinical management, which in turn shapes the content of professional education and training programs as well as being disseminated to the community,” according to the Institute’s Executive Director, Professor Gordon Parker.

The Institute today released its 2006 Report outlining the growth of the Institute. “While growth has proceeded beyond expectation, it is clear that we have the bedrocks in place to be truly aspirational in chartering forward progress,” Professor Parker said

As part of its education and training effort, the Institute is providing courses to General Practitioners and Psychologists to better manage and treat patients with mood disorders. Similar programs are starting to also attract large numbers of nurses, school counsellors and other health professionals.

Clinical services are a key component of the Institute’s work. During 2007, the number of patients who attended the Depression Clinic increased by almost one third to 310 patients, compared to the previous 12 months. The Depression Clinic is one of the flagships of the Institute in offering a detailed diagnostic assessment for those with mood disorders and management suggestions to the referring practitioner.

A review has found that 70 percent of the Clinic patients receive a ‘new’ diagnosis. For example, 50 percent of the referred patients are given a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder for the first time and/or have a radical shift to their management suggested. Sometimes this involves changing the medication approach and on other occasions, weighting non-medication treatment strategies.

The Institute has a long list of achievements on the research front. A \$1 million grant from the New South Wales Government is helping the Institute develop the Mood Assessment Program (commonly known as the MAP).

The Institute is looking to pilot the MAP during 2007 as a way of equipping general practitioners and health professionals, particularly those in rural NSW, with the know-how of highly skilled mood disorder specialists.

Toward the later half of 2006, the Institute launched its third writing competition. On this occasion the Institute entrants from people focusing on *The Getting of Wisdom – Managing the ‘Highs’ of Bipolar Disorder*. By sharing these stories with others, the Institute believes it will help develop a grassroots Consumer Bipolar Disorder Survival Kit.

The Institute’s full report for 2006 appears on its website: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

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