



NEWS RELEASE

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BLACK DOG INSTITUTE OFFERS NEW HELP FOR BIPOLAR SUFFERERS

Australian artist, Margaret Olley, today launched a unique web-based educational program to help people suffering from Bipolar Disorder.

The program was developed by the Black Dog Institute and provides expert, factual and consumer oriented advice to people who suffer from Bipolar Disorder as well as their families and friends.

The new program – available via the Institute’s website – blackdoginstitute.org.au – is believed to be the first of its kind anywhere in the world.

Margaret Olley, who has spoken about her own depression in recent years, emphasised during the launch today how important it was for people who suffer mental illness – and, in particular, Bipolar Disorder- to seek help. “With the pressure of life today on people they need help,” she said.

“Help is available and avoids people going through years of torture.”

It is well-known that many people feel uneasy about seeking help. This web-based program allows people to obtain information anonymously – whether for themselves or for family members and friends.

Professor Gordon Parker, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute, said the new program comprised nine separate modules addressing different aspects of the illness,

- The diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder
- The Causes of Bipolar Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder medications
- Psychological treatments for Bipolar Disorder
- Staying well with a stay well plan
- Issues for carers
- Omega -3 as a treatment for Bipolar Disorder
- Personal perspectives on living with Bipolar Disorder
- Question and answer sessions

The program runs for about 100 minutes in total, but each module can be listened to separately. Of the 10 speakers, five have experienced Bipolar Disorder, thus ensuring a rich mix of clinical, academic and personal experience.

“For any individual receiving a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder there is an impact phase, where the diagnosis and its perceived implications can be extremely distressing for individuals – over many months or years,” Professor Parker said.

The Institute program, he said, is designed to reduce the period where any such individual moves from feeling ‘controlled’ by Bipolar Disorder to ‘controlling it’.

In early 2005, the Institute conducted a pilot educational program which was attended by about 20 people who suffer Bipolar Disorder. Participants attended for two hours per week over six weeks.

The program was highly successful, but limited in its reach and was potentially costly to repeat on a regular basis.

“It was decided the best way forward was to offer a web-based educational program which allowed anyone with internet access to view the program, thus making it possible to reach a far-wider audience than what could have been achieved with a face-to-face program,” Professor Parker said.

(The program is best viewed on a broadband internet connection. For those with dial-up connections, a CD-ROM version of the program has been prepared and will be made available free-of-charge. To reserve a copy, contact blackdog@unsw.edu.au or phone 02 9382 8203).

Media Inquiries: Contact Ian Dose 0419 618 606 or Email i.dose@unsw.edu.au