

NEWS RELEASE

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DEPRESSION WORLD FIRST FOR TAMWORTH

Tamworth now has access to a world first program that assists in the assessment and diagnosis of conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder.

The Mood Assessment Program (or MAP) is the brainchild of the Black Dog Institute. "The MAP is a computerised assessment and diagnostic program incorporating nearly a quarter of a century of sophisticated clinical expertise in the assessment, diagnosis and management planning for people suffering depression and bipolar disorder," said Professor Gordon Parker, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute.

Whilst computerised assessment programs are now common in general medicine there is no other assessment and diagnostic program like the MAP anywhere in the world. The Institute, located on the grounds of the Prince of Wales Hospital at Randwick in Sydney, has been funded by the NSW Government to pilot the MAP in a variety of settings across NSW and is now working in partnership with the North West Slopes Division of General Practice to establish a MAP Centre in Tamworth.

Mr Graeme Kershaw, CEO, of the North West Slopes Division of General Practice said, "We are delighted to be able to offer this service. Until now patients have been required to travel to Sydney to access MAP assessments". The Division already provides a range of services to health professionals in the region and the MAP will be a significant asset to clinicians treating patients with complex conditions such as depression and bipolar disorder.

Opening of the MAP centre has been enthusiastically welcomed by local health professionals as an important step in improving the diagnosis and treatment of depression and bipolar disorder for patients in the Tamworth region. Local GP Dr Roland Loeve said, "The MAP will offer GPs in the area an assessment which is relatively simple and easy for the patient to use. It will save time, give an accurate diagnosis, and allow early decision making on which to base treatment. This will improve access for patients

as well as free doctors up to focus on assisting patients through relevant treatment pathways. Cost is always an issue in regional and rural areas and the MAP program offers assistance to all patients regardless of their ability to pay” said Dr Loeve.

HOW IT WORKS

The MAP is a computer program that has been developed by the Black Dog Institute to assist health professionals in the diagnosis and treatment of depression and other mood disorders. By completing a MAP assessment, patients are able to provide their referring health professional with information that will assist in the development of a treatment plan specific to the circumstances of each individual patient.

“It is important to understand that everyone’s experience of depression is different” said Professor Gordon Parker. “By completing a MAP assessment patients are able to provide their referring health professional with information that will assist in making a diagnosis and developing a tailored treatment plan unique to each patient’s experience of their mood disorder”.

To be eligible to undertake a MAP assessment patients must first obtain a referral from their treating health professional. The patient then attends the MAP Centre where they spend approximately one hour entering information into a computer. Based on this detailed information, the computer generates a detailed report for the referring health professional. Treatment suggestions are also provided to the referring health professional. There is no cost to the patient for undertaking a MAP assessment.

The MAP provides sophisticated information to referring health professionals that otherwise could only be provided by a highly skilled mood disorders specialist. The information is presented in a format that can be readily used by both the referring health professional and their patient.

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