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## HELP TO FIGHT DEPRESSION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Australia is to help developing nations adopt best practices in the treatment of mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder.

The Black Dog Institute has initiated the program, between 21 September and 2 October, 2009 with 13 health professionals from across the Pacific. It follows the success of the inaugural program that attracted representatives from Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the Solomon Islands in August last year.

The two-week training program in 2009 known as “Improving the Identification and Management of Mood Disorders” is supported with funding from the Chris Molner bequest and AusAid, the Federal Government’s Australian Agency for International Development.

Director of Psychological Services at the Black Dog Institute, Associate Professor Vijaya Manicavasagar, said it was important to raise awareness amongst clinicians in developing countries about the impact of undiagnosed mood disorders on quality of life, work and family as well as health services and the community.

“If we can improve their understanding of mood disorders, it will lead to better diagnosing and management of these conditions,” the Professor said.

The funding from the Chris Molner bequest and AusAid allows the Institute to meet the cost of the training program as well as expenses such as flights and accommodation for the Pacific representatives who are leaders in their field.

During an intense two-weeks, these senior clinicians will be immersed in a training program that looks at the processes developed over nearly 30 years at the Black Dog Institute (and its predecessor, the Mood Disorders Unit). “The challenge to these visiting health professionals will be to deliver health policy changes in their homeland,” according to Associate Professor Manicavasagar.

The Institute has been partnered in the program by the national Ministry of Health in each country and the World Health Organisation Pacific Islands Mental Health Network (WHO PIMHnet).

The 13 participants from across the Pacific comprise two each from the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu as well as one from Fiji.

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