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'Movember' – changing the face of men's health

There is a reason for male staff at St George Hospital appearing more hirsute around the wards during the month of November.

'Movember' is a fun campaign run throughout Australia, where men are encouraged to grow moustaches to raise awareness about men's health issues.

At the start of November, Associate Professor George Skowronski, and Intensive Care Unit nurses Mark Keating, Trevor Rock and Lee Murray registered with clean-shaven faces. As the month progresses they will grow and groom their moustaches, along the way raising money and awareness about male health issues as possible.

There is a serious side to Movember – the aim of the men's health campaign this year is to raise awareness of prostate cancer and depression.

Some men lack awareness about health issues they face, and are reluctant to see a doctor about their illness, or to go for regular medical check ups.

Professor John Kearsley, Director of the Cancer Care Centre at St George Hospital said that early detection of prostate cancer is an important aspect of ensuring that the prostate cancer can be cured.

"The majority of the 2,600 deaths a year from prostate cancer occur when prostate cancer is discovered too late and has begun to spread to other parts of the body," Professor Kearsley said.

"For that reason, testing is essential from the age of 50, or younger, if prostate cancer is prevalent in the family.

"Early detection with appropriate treatment will save lives, and research figures reveal that with screening and PSA testing, recent death rates for the disease have shown a significant decline," he said.

Professor Gordon Parker, Executive Director of the Black Dog Institute, said one in six men would suffer clinical depression over their lifetime.

"While there are differing types and causes, Christmas is a vulnerable time for depression, particularly among men," he said.

"The most vulnerable men are those recently separated or divorced, those living alone or unemployed and drinking alcohol to excess.

"Men falling into these categories feel disconnected - sometimes leading to depression. It is important that they have strategies that advance their social integration and redress their isolation, particularly around Christmas," Professor Parker said.

If you would like to provide sponsorship during the month of November, please go to <http://www.movember.com/au/donate>

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