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BLACK DOG INSTITUTE



NEWS RELEASE

HELP FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS SUFFERING DEPRESSION

The Black Dog Institute has stepped up efforts to help School Counsellors deal with the growing incidence of depression suffered by children and adolescents.

The Institute's initiative comes in the wake of an alarming trend in developed countries showing that the incidence of mood disorders amongst young people has increased steadily over the last five to ten years.

The Institute, regarded as the leading Australian authority on mood disorders, has developed a training program aimed specifically at School Counsellors to help them better identify and manage mood disorders amongst children and adolescents.

The Institute's Director of Psychological Services, Associate Professor Vijaya Manicavasagar, said it was estimated one to three percent of children (up to 12 years of age) and three to nine percent of adolescents (aged between 13 and 19 years) suffered from depression.

"Females are almost twice as likely to suffer from depression – particularly after the onset of puberty - than their male counterparts. However, males are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviour and have a higher incidence of suicide," according to the Professor.

Up until now, the Black Dog Institute has been providing accredited education and training for Psychologists and General Practitioners that focused on the identification, treatment and management of mood disorders (depressive disorders and bipolar disorder).

The Institute is proposing to expand and specifically tailor the programs for other health professionals, such as Nurses and School Counsellors.

"The School Counsellor Program will present new information based on advances in the diagnosis of mood disorders and introduce the Black Dog Institute model of depression (that there are multiple mood disorders, with differing causes and benefiting from differing and rationally defined treatment management strategies).

"The Program examines the impact of stress and personality styles in development of mood disorders, with a particular focus on the anxious worrying and perfectionist personality styles.

"It also looks at the use of medication in the treatment of mood disorders among children and adolescents and explores the current issues surrounding the use of antidepressants and other medications," according to Professor Manicavasagar.

The School Counsellor Program is to be launched at the end of this month with courses already scheduled for Randwick (28 & 29 August/Prince of Wales Hospital), Penrith (4 & 5 September/Community Room, Jamison High School) and Newcastle (25 & 26 September/Dept of Education, Adamstown). Other dates and venues will be listed shortly. More details are available on the Black Dog Institute website: blackdoginstitute.org.au

The Institute will also be conducting these programs in rural and Regional centres as well as other metropolitan locations. The scarcity of much-needed psychiatric and psychological services requires that health professionals working in rural settings fulfil roles of other specialised health professionals.

In addition, professionals working in rural areas face isolation from their peers and other professionals, and, due to the problems of distance, difficulties in attending regular professional education meetings.

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