



# Pharmacotherapy and Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care Initiative

Darebin Community Health  
and the Northern Division of  
General Practice  
*Working Together*



# Pharmacotherapy and Better Outcomes in MH Care

- The NDGP and DCH have common goals in enhancing access to primary health services in the northern area of Melbourne
- The NDGP has a special interest group comprised of local GPs with an interest in working with people who are experiencing drug and alcohol issues.
- DCH has been delivering a Pharmacotherapy Prescribing Service (PPS) at their Panch site for the past four years



# Pharmacotherapy and Better Outcomes in MH Care

- Partnership approach under the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Initiative funded by the Department of Health and Ageing
- The aim of the partnership is to increase access to psychological services for people who are clients of the pharmacotherapy program with both mental health and substance use issues
- A psychologist, engaged by NDGP through this program, commenced sessions at Panch site of DCH in March 2007



# Pharmacotherapy and Better Outcomes in MH Care

- Psychological services are provided to clients with co-morbid mental health and substance use issues who are referred by the on site prescribing doctors
- Prior to referral the GP prescriber conducts a mental health assessment and develops a mental health care plan with the client
- The client can access six sessions of CBT based therapy with the option of a further six sessions following a review by the referring GP



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## OUTCOMES

- 28 referrals received from four GP prescribers for six sessions over 3 months
- Five clients re-referred for an extra six sessions
- Number of failure to attend were higher than for the program in general
- Clients seen reflect local demographics
- Several of the clients were of the same family group living in the same house



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## FEEDBACK FROM CLIENTS

- Clients report they have liked seeing a counsellor at the same site as their GP
- Clients report a feeling of trust and respect for providers working at the site
- Able to access psychological services free of any cost
- Clients were also referred to other services at the Panch site such as dentists and other allied health services



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## FEEDBACK FROM THE PSYCHOLOGIST

- Enjoys working with this client group
- Finds it challenging in a positive way
- Sees co-location to be an advantage
- Has regular case contact with GPs and other staff who work at the site
- Special mention of a client who has completed 12 sessions



# Pharmacotherapy and Better Outcomes in MH Care

## FEEDBACK FROM THE DIVISION

- First time the NDGP has entered into a partnership with a pharmacotherapy service under the Better Outcomes program
- Too early for a formal evaluation, however the division is pleased with the better access that the partnership affords to this marginalised client group
- The division would like to continue to develop this important partnership



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## FEEDBACK FROM DCH

- Doctors report that having the psychologist on site is a significant advantage
- Clients are referred in a familiar setting
- Enables dialogue to occur between the GPs and the psychologist for better management of health and welfare issues
- Positive client outcomes have been reported