

ARH - Australian Rotary Health - Fighting Mental Illness in the Digital Age

In a quest to help young people experiencing mental ill-health, Australian Rotary Health is funding a growing number of research projects to test web and phone based mental health interventions. Of the \$3 million they invested in research this year, 60% was directed towards improving the mental health of young Australians.

At the Black Dog Institute, NSW, Dr Janine Clarke and Professor Judy Proudfoot are providing the first Australian data on a web and mobile phone-based intervention for young people living with diabetes. *myCompass* aims to improve the mental well-being and reduce psychological and diabetes-related distress for 16 to 25 year olds with Type 1 diabetes.

“The Internet and mobile phones are popular tools in the everyday lives of young people,” Dr Clarke said. “We think that a self-help program combining these technologies provides an attractive alternative for young people who may not feel comfortable talking to doctors about their mental health.”

Funding Partner PhD Scholar, Emma Gliddon, from Deakin University, Victoria, tests the success of an online self-help forum for people living with Bipolar Disorder. *MoodSwings* provides online tools to assist in the day-to-day management of Bipolar.

“Something as simple as having someone to talk to can make a substantial impact on a person’s well-being,” Emma said.

At Monash University, Victoria, Dr Marie Yap is leading a study which developed Parenting Guidelines based on evidence that parental factors can increase or decrease an adolescents' risk for depression and anxiety.

This tailored online intervention *Parenting Strategies* provides an immediate feedback report highlighting the parent’s individual parenting strengths and weaknesses; and recommends specific modules of the web-based intervention which support parents in making changes to the identified areas of weakness in their parenting.

“The greatest innovation of this project is the sophisticated programming that automatically tailors the parenting program,” Dr Yap said.



A self-help app for adolescents used in one of the studies funded by Australian Rotary Health

Australian Rotary Health is one of the largest independent health research funds in Australia.

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