

MEDIA RELEASE

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WORKING TOGETHER TO TREAT MENTAL HEALTH

Four key Australian medical organisations, representing general practitioners, psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health nurses have signed an agreement to work together to improve the quality of mental health care available to patients.

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), The Australian Psychological Society (APS) and The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) have signed a memorandum of understanding which focuses on working together to develop programs aimed at promoting mental health and the welfare of people with mental health concerns.

RACGP President, Dr Vasantha Preetham, said the agreement was particularly timely given the Council of Australian Governments reforms in mental health, and the increasing trend towards team-based mental health care.

“General practice is often the first point of call for patients with mental health concerns. General practitioners are on the front line of providing high quality care to these patients,” he said. “We strongly support a multi-disciplinary approach to providing the best care. General practitioners are keen to work with our colleagues in other specialties to provide the care that patients expect and deserve.”

RANZCP President, Professor Ken Kirkby, said the agreement would help to strengthen the existing relationships between the signatories, and the RANZCP looked forward to working even more closely with the other professional bodies in the future.

“We have much in common, in particular the maintenance of a high quality mental health workforce and impeccable education standards. This new partnership will increase the focus on multidisciplinary practice between professions, provide greater flexibility in clinical support ultimately will lead to better health care services, particularly in rural areas, and increased workforce capacity to support people with mental illness.”

ACMHN President, Dr Stephen Elsom, said the college looked forward to developing true collaborative working relationships with other mental health professional bodies to “improve the delivery of mental health care across our community”.

APS President, Ms Amanda Gordon, said the APS looks forward to working even more closely with the key professional bodies and colleagues in psychiatry, general practice and mental health nursing. “When mental health organisations talk to each other the patient can only benefit.”

FOR FURTHER COMMENT

Mr. Jason Berek-Lewis
RACGP National Manager – Media and Communications
0404 055 265

Professor Ken Kirkby
President RANZCP
0419 120 041

Dr Stephen Elsom
President ACMHN
02 6285 1078

Ms Amanda Gordon
President APS
0411 428 250

Background

Mental illness accounted for almost 30% of the non-fatal disease burden in Australia with only heart disease and cancer causing a higher burden of disease.

Research indicates that 18% of the population experienced a mental health problem every year and three percent of Australian adults experience a severe mental illness, such as chronic depression or a psychotic disorder.

RACGP

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners is responsible for maintaining standards for quality clinical practice, education and training, and research in Australian general practice. The RACGP has the largest general practitioner membership of any medical organisation in Australia, with the majority of Australia's general practitioners belonging to their professional college. Over 22,000 general practitioners are members of the RACGP Continuing Professional Development Program. The RACGP National Rural Faculty, representing more than 5,000 members, has the largest rural general practitioner membership of any medical organisation in Australia. Visit www.racgp.org.au

RANZCP

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (www.ranzcp.org) was founded in 1946 and is the principal organisation representing the medical specialty of psychiatry in Australia and New Zealand. There are currently 2600 RANZCP Fellows who account for about 85 per cent of all practicing psychiatrists in Australia and more than half the psychiatrists in New Zealand.

ACMHN

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is the peak professional body for mental health nurses in Australia. It is the only organisation that solely represents mental health nurses.

APS

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) is the largest professional association for psychologists in Australia, representing more than 15,500 members. The APS is committed to advancing psychology as a discipline and profession. It spreads the message that psychologists make a difference to peoples' lives, through improving scientific knowledge and community wellbeing. APS members form a dynamic group that advocate for psychologists at all levels of government. They are constantly promoting the contributions psychology makes to people's health and wellbeing, and to understanding important social issues facing Australian society.