



500 MEMBERS NOW USING "BLUEBOARD" ONLINE DEPRESSION SITE

The Australian Foundation for Mental Health Research says the "BlueBoard" Internet site for people suffering from depression now has 500 members.

"BlueBoard" is an online virtual support group, and is part of the BluePages site (www.bluepages.anu.edu.au) conducted by the Centre for Mental Health Research at the ANU. The Foundation supports the work of the Centre by raising funds for essential research into depression and other mental health problems.

The Director of the Centre's Consumer Research Unit, Dr Kathy Griffiths, said the number of posts on "BlueBoard" had exceeded 20,000.

"The principle behind "BlueBoard" is simple – it allows people experiencing mental health problems to talk to each other. The comments on the site indicate that it's used by a wide variety of people who share depression in common," Dr Griffiths said.

"Its value was summed up by a BlueBoard member who wrote: "bb is great and my only support....I need it regularly as it keeps me in check and motivated....probably because I can talk about things 24 hours a day 7 days a week. It's like a help line for me and the people on here are amazing, caring, loving souls".

"BlueBoard is part of our BluePages site, which provides information on the usefulness of around 40 medical, psychological and alternative treatments for depression. It also provides information about the symptoms of depression, and the stories of high achieving individuals who have experienced and overcome depression," Dr Griffiths said.

"BlueBoard and BluePages are different from other online depression sites, because they provide a forum for mutual support and valuable research information from the consumers' perspective. Most research on mental health focuses on topics of interest to clinicians and policy makers, but the voices of consumers direct the Centre's research priorities through online anonymous feedback from people suffering from depression," she said.

"Our BluePages site has also gone international. It has been re-designed to allow for access in different languages. Work is currently underway to produce a Norwegian and Spanish version. The Norwegian version is being created in collaboration with the University of Tromso, which will be conducting a randomised controlled trial of the Norwegian MoodGYM and BluePages sites".

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