



INTERNET DEPRESSION SITE OFFERS HELP - ANONYMOUSLY

The Centre for Mental Health Research at the ANU in Canberra said today that its BluePages internet based depression site (www.bluepages.anu.edu.au) was an important, anonymous source of depression information for the community, including men who have difficulty communicating their problems.

The Centre says the death of former Rugby League personality Steve Rogers has once again highlighted the importance of encouraging men to access quality resources and support.

The Director of the Depression & Anxiety Consumer Research Unit at CMHR, Dr Kathy Griffiths, said the BluePages website (www.bluepages.anu.edu.au) includes information on the usefulness of around 40 medical, psychological and alternative treatments for depression. It also includes information about the symptoms of depression, online depression and anxiety quizzes, an online mutual support group, and stories of high achieving individuals who have experienced and overcome depression.

"Currently BluePages attracts nearly 10,000 unique visitors a month who use the site to better understand depression and how it can be treated," Dr Griffiths said.

"The Chairman of beyondblue, Jeff Kennett, rightly points out that prominent sporting identities feel unable to communicate their depressive feelings, but this is common throughout Australian society," she said. "The strength of BluePages is that it provides quality information which can be accessed anonymously, confidentially and free of charge through the Internet," she said.

"The site was evaluated in a randomized controlled trial published in the British Medical Journal (Christensen et.al, 2004), and was shown to reduce depressive symptoms in users, improve knowledge of depression and reduce stigma among people in the community. It is the only depression information website in the world for which there is such evidence of efficacy".

"The case of Steve Rogers highlights the imperative to de-stigmatise depression, which is currently the biggest source of disability in Australian society," Dr Griffiths said. "BluePages is one tool in the important fight against stigma."

The BluePages website was developed as a research project of the Centre, which is supported by AFFIRM - the Australian Foundation for Mental Health Research. AFFIRM is currently undertaking its 'BluePages Appeal' to attract corporate and individual support to fund the ongoing delivery of the highly successful site.

"BluePages was developed through research funding in 2001, and continues to provide a valuable service to the Australian community. We now need community and corporate support to enable this ongoing service provision," Dr Griffiths said.

www.affirm.org.au

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