



NEW ONLINE SERVICE TARGETS RURAL MENTAL HEALTH

A new online service just launched by the ANU Centre for Mental Health Research and the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health will provide support specifically designed for mental health professionals in rural, regional and remote areas.

MulgaNet (www.mulganet.net.au) is a virtual network for information and resource sharing for rural mental health clinicians, and aims to assist psychologists, GPs, nurses, allied health professionals, community workers and researchers.

The Australian Foundation for Mental Health Research supports the work of the Centre for Mental Health Research by raising funds for essential research into depression and other mental health problems.

The Director of the Depression and Anxiety Consumer Research Unit at CMHR, Dr Kathy Griffiths, said MulgaNet was an initiative of the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health and CMHR.

"We know that country people are susceptible to mental health problems, especially young rural men. Our 2004 study, "Suicide and mental health in rural, remote and metropolitan areas in Australia" (Caldwell et. al.) showed that young rural men accounted for 40.4 suicides per 100,000 people, and those living in remote Australia accounted for 51.7 suicides per 100,000 people, compared with 31.8 per 100,000 in metropolitan Australia", Dr Griffiths said.

"MulgaNet aims to help professionals working with rural people, who are affected by the tyranny of distance. It provides a range of documents and links posted by our growing band of members, which includes nurses, GPs, researchers, consumers and psychiatrists" she said.

"Mental health professionals will be able to use the site to exchange information in a secure environment – share experiences through a bulletin board, tap into information resources, monitor an events calendar and post details of their research into our Research Directory".

"As an example, MulgaNet provides a link to a major report by the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health following its conference in December 2003 on the impact of the drought on rural Australians", Dr Griffiths said.

"The conference brought together drought support workers, rural support agencies and mental health services to discuss the range of strategies to support the mental health and wellbeing of farmers and the rural communities. It details which strategies worked well, and strategies which should be in place to ensure that effective service responses are in place to prepare for the next drought", she said.

"We value our partnership with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health in providing this invaluable service to non-metropolitan health professionals".

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