



AFFIRM
THE AUSTRALIAN FOUNDATION FOR
MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH

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NEWS RELEASE

100,000 PEOPLE LOG ON TO AWARD WINNING E-MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

MoodGYM (www.moodgym.anu.edu.au) - an innovative, interactive web program designed to prevent and decrease depressive symptoms developed by the Centre for Mental Health Research, now has 100,000 participants after only 18 months of operation.

MoodGYM has won a number of prestigious awards since its inception, including the 2005 Baxter Healthcare National Innovation Award from the Australian Healthcare Association, a Services Innovation iAward from the Australian ICT industry's national program honouring the year's "best of the best" ICT business strategies in 2004, and the Australian National University Prize for Innovative IT applications on Campus in the same year.

The Director of the Centre, Professor Helen Christensen, said the high level of registrations for MoodGYM over such a short period illustrated its popularity and acceptability. "This level of usage also illustrates the feasibility of this delivery form of mental health service. People obviously want e-health services".

"MoodGYM consists of five modules - an interactive game, anxiety and depression assessments, downloadable relaxation audio, a workbook and feedback assessment. It focuses on people with depression - a growing problem in the Australian community", Professor Christensen said.

"One in five Australians will suffer from a mental health illness in any given year, and Internet based programs like MoodGYM offer anonymity and permanent access. MoodGYM is especially useful for people living in rural and remote areas who have difficulty accessing health professionals", she said.

"MoodGYM teaches the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy, which has been found to be helpful for people with depression. Using flashed diagrams and online exercises, MoodGYM demonstrates the relationship between thoughts and emotions - users are taught to come to grips with their own feelings and the 'warpy' thoughts that might accompany them. MoodGYM also works through dealing with stress, handling separation and relationship break-ups, and suggesting relaxation and meditation techniques".

"The Centre, which is supported by fund raising by the Australian Foundation for Mental Health Research (AFFIRM), is also studying the impact of MoodGYM on participants through the MoodGYM in General Practice project with the Brain & Mind Research Institute and Central Sydney Divisions of General Practice. It aims to evaluate the effectiveness of MoodGYM as an adjunct for depression intervention in general practice", Professor Christensen said.

"MoodGYM in Schools also aims to evaluate the effectiveness of MoodGYM in preventing depression and increasing resilience skills in young people aged 14-16 years", she said.

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