

Tackling mental health issues in people with an intellectual disability

May 14 2014, by Susi Hamilton



A new resource is being launched to tackle mental health problems among people with an intellectual disability and to improve the system that is currently failing them.

The Accessible Mental Health Services for People with an Intellectual Disability: A Guide for Providers (otherwise known as The Guide) has been developed by UNSW researchers and will provide a national framework for action for all frontline [mental health](#) service professionals. It is being launched at the Royal Australian and New

Zealand College of Psychiatrists 2014 Congress in Perth.

"Approximately 400,000 Australians live with an [intellectual disability](#) and they are two to three times more likely than the general population to experience [mental health problems](#), like depression and schizophrenia," says UNSW Chair of Intellectual Disability Mental Health Associate Professor Julian Trollor, who is one of the Guide's authors.

"Despite this, many Australian mental health professionals report that they feel ill-equipped and lack confidence in assessing, supporting and managing people with an intellectual disability," says Associate Professor Trollor, who also heads the Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN) at UNSW Medicine.

"The current services are not meeting the needs of patients. This new Guide, which is a practical resource underpinned by human rights principles, will go some way to tackle this by supporting mental health practitioners to provide the highest quality of care and timely access to services for people with an intellectual disability."

The Guide, which is the first document of its type in Australia, has been developed by 3DN at UNSW Medicine with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health. It is informed by extensive background work, including evidence-based practice and clinical consultation.

"This Guide is a product of comprehensive consultation, research and collaboration, and is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the service needs of people with intellectual disability and mental illness. Supporting frontline [mental health providers](#) to improve service accessibility and delivery will achieve better health and wellbeing outcomes for this important client group," says Jane Halton, Secretary of

the Australian Government Department of Health.

The pioneering resource encourages a co-ordinated approach across various service sectors and is available at the [3DN website](#).

Provided by University of New South Wales

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