

8 October, 2013

Project Air Strategy for Personality Disorders recognised with a major mental health award

The Project Air Strategy for Personality Disorders, based at the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute (IHMRI), has won a major mental health award.

Presented by the NSW Minister for Mental Health, the Hon Kevin Humphries MP, at a ceremony at NSW Parliament House at the start of Mental Health Month (October), the Mental Health Matters award was nominated by ARAFMI - the association for relatives and friends of mental illness.

The ARAFMI nomination considered Project Air "a stand-out example of successful collaboration between institutes, local health districts and community (families, carers and consumers) to contribute to improved wellbeing of people with personality disorders and their families".

The awards are presented annually by the Mental Health Association and Mental Health Commission of NSW. This year, over 130 projects were nominated for just 12 awards.

Project Air was given the Cross Sector Collaboration award, which recognises excellence and innovation in mental health initiatives involving collaboration or partnerships between organisations that contribute to improved wellbeing or quality of life for people living with mental illness.

The strategy uses applied research and clinical expertise to improve the capacity of mainstream mental health services to manage and treat personality disorders. A major goal is to improve referral pathways between generic and specialist treatment options. The project has developed new, innovative programs and delivered expert interventions through working with managers on service re-design, upgrading mental health staff skills, supporting consumers and carers and evaluating outcomes.

The Director of the Project Air Strategy, Professor Brin Grenyer, summed this up stating that the strategy "endorses an integrative, collaborative, relational approach and thereby promotes a personality disorders-friendly health service".

He added: "This is a great result for IHMRI, the University of Wollongong and the NSW health service and is a tribute to all those who have worked so hard to make the Project Air Strategy a success."

The strategy has been implemented across two large health districts (South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health Districts), comprising 1.2 million residents and there are plans to expand this reach in 2014.

The strategy has already achieved some early successes, including reductions in presentations to emergency departments and shorter in-patient stays through the provision of alternative, evidence-based psychological therapies delivered in the community.

NSW Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, opened the awards ceremony and stated: "Mental health is everybody's business - in contrast to 50 years ago when a self-conscious silence was immediately drawn at any reference to a mental health problem."

The Project Air Strategy is working closely with the NSW Commissioner for Mental Health and the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office to ensure that people with personality disorders have access to the best available suite of new treatments, some of which have been developed at IHMRI or in collaboration with researchers in other institutions or organisations.

Ends

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About IHMRI

The Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute (IHMRI) is a joint initiative of the University of Wollongong and Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District.

IHMRI's goal is to foster, support and grow health and medical research in the Illawarra by connecting and supporting academic and clinician researchers around research problems of relevance to the region and the world. IHMRI provides research leadership, coordination, infrastructure and facilities to more than 500 academic and clinical researchers throughout the region.