

Strong link between diabetes and depression

Wednesday 5 April 2017: This year's World Health Day (Friday 7 April) focuses on depression. Globally, around 350 million people of all ages and from all walks of life suffer from depression. People with depression are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes and depression is more common and highly recurrent in people with diabetes.

Professor Jane Speight, Foundation Director of the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD), comments that "our Diabetes MILES-2 study found that 36% of people with insulin-treated type 2 diabetes; 21% of people with non-insulin-treated type 2 diabetes; and 24% of people with type 1 diabetes experience depressive symptoms. These rates are two to three times higher than in the general population".

Resources released last year under the National Diabetes Services Scheme highlight why diabetes health professionals need to know about depression and how to help people with diabetes who may be affected. Entitled: ***Diabetes and Emotional Health: A handbook for health professionals supporting adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes***, these resources were developed by the ACBRD in collaboration with Diabetes Australia.

Diabetes Victoria CEO Craig Bennett comments that, "it is vitally important that those people living with diabetes who experience symptoms of depression seek help, and have access to suitable treatment. Diabetes health professionals need to understand how to identify depressive symptoms and be prepared to discuss mental health issues. These resources will help with that."

Dr Christel Hendrieckx, Senior Research Fellow at the ACBRD and lead author of these resources comments that, "these new resources will help health professionals to recognise signs of depression and be more confident in having conversations about depression, including coping strategies, with people living with diabetes."

"Some common signs that people with diabetes may be experiencing depressive symptoms include declining motivation to engage in diabetes self-care tasks, as well as more frequent presentations to health professionals with the same symptoms or missed appointments," said Dr Hendrieckx, who is also a Clinical Psychologist.

Diabetes Victoria offers an array of education programs & services for people living with all types of diabetes, including online and face-to-face peer support programs. "Our Diabetes MILES-2 study found that people who took part in peer support programs felt less alone and more motivated to manage their diabetes," according to Professor Speight.

We support, empower and campaign for all Victorians affected by diabetes.

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Note to Editors:

Electronic copies of the *Diabetes and Emotional Health* handbook for health professionals are free and can be accessed here:

www.ndss.com.au/online-resources-for-health-professionals

This handbook outlines strategies & tools to help health professionals better recognise emotional problems and to work with people with diabetes to reduce the significant psychological burden that can be caused by diabetes.

The ***Diabetes and Depression*** factsheet (for people with diabetes) includes tips on coping and information about where to seek further support. It can be accessed here:

<https://www.ndss.com.au/diabetes-and-depression>

This handbook and factsheet were developed as part of the *NDSS Mental Health and Diabetes National Development Program*. They were developed in collaboration with the ACBRD.

The ACBRD is a partnership for better health between Diabetes Victoria and Deakin University. The ACBRD is dedicated to investigating the behavioural, psychological and social aspects of living with diabetes.

The handbook has undergone evaluation, which involved interviews with health professionals (eg diabetes educators, GPs, nurses, dietitians & endocrinologists) and people with diabetes, who read and commented on draft copies of the handbook.

Mental healthcare for people with diabetes is recognised as a priority area in the Australian National Diabetes Strategy 2016–2020 – see the [report here](#):

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nds-2016-2020>

The Diabetes MILES-2 Survey was conducted in 2015 by the ACBRD. A total of 2,342 adults with type 1 or type 2 diabetes took part. The report is available from: <http://diabetesmiles.org.au>

Facts about diabetes:

- In Australia, around 1.7 million people are living with diabetes and a further 280 develop diabetes every day.
- Around 300,000 Victorians are living with diabetes.
- In Victoria, more than 70 people develop diabetes every day.
- An estimated 500,000 Victorians have elevated blood glucose levels and are at high-risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Diabetes is a serious, progressive and complex condition, which can result in serious complications.

The World Health Organisation is focusing on the following messages for World Health Day 2017:

- Encouraging people with depression, in all countries, to seek and get help.
- Ensuring the general public is better informed about depression, its causes and possible consequences, including suicide, and what help is or can be available for prevention and treatment.
- The importance of offering support to family, friends and colleagues for people living with depression.
- In Australia, it's estimated that 45 per cent of people will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime (ABS 2008).

World Health Day is celebrated each year on 7 April, marking the day in 1948 when the World Health Organisation was established.