

Sunshine Coast surgery steps up mental health message

A popular medical clinic in the Sunshine Coast hinterland is actively working to improve the wellbeing of its patients this Queensland Mental Health Week, with the implementation of an innovative mental health program.

Cooroy's Maple Street Surgery is the fifth practice to sign up for the StepCare digital assessment tool on the Sunshine Coast, developed by Black Dog Institute to help detect symptoms of anxiety, depression and risky drinking in patients visiting their GP.

Robb Major, a Senior Manager at Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN, the organisation funding the program, said the StepCare program aimed to deliver better screening and treatment to patients.

"It's a simple process really and completely voluntary; patients fill out a brief survey on a mobile tablet as they wait for their appointment with a GP – which is usually for a completely unrelated matter", Mr Major said.

"Once the survey is completed, an assessment of their mental wellbeing is generated straight away and securely sent into the practices' clinical information software.

"That means the results, along with personalised treatment options including evidence-based online self-help resources, are already with the GP when the patient's appointment begins."

Data from initial trials of the program revealed 1 in 5 patients who showed symptoms of depression or anxiety had not talked to their GP about their mental health in the past.

Director of Discovery and Innovation at Black Dog Institute, Nicole Cockayne, says StepCare is about supporting GPs and improving the opportunities to screen and monitor mental health issues and match appropriate services to the needs of the individual as early as possible.

According to recent Australian Bureau of Statistics data, mental illness will affect almost half of all Australians at some point in their lives.

For Maple Street Surgery General Practitioner Dr Tom Philips, adopting the StepCare program is a way of starting a conversation with his patients he may not have otherwise had.

"There's still a lot of stigma around people openly discussing their mental wellbeing, even with their doctor, but we know early intervention can make a huge difference in reducing the impact and duration of mental illness," Dr Philips said.

"Maple Street Surgery is also trying to facilitate conversations around mental health outside of the clinical setting too, and are hosting an afternoon tea this Thursday, which is also World Mental Health Day.

"Two mental health nurses, along with the CEO of Eden Hospital will be on hand with tips on how to manage mental health, along with complimentary mindfulness colouring books and stress balls.

"The Black Dog Institute and the PHN will also be there with information, along with a highly anticipated guest speaker who will share their own powerful story of living with mental illness.

"It should be a great event, and we are looking forward to seeing us all together to raise awareness, provide support and reduce the stigma surrounding mental health."

Queensland Mental Health Week runs between 6 – 12 October.

EVENT DETAILS NEXT PAGE

MEDIA RELEASE

9 October 2019

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY EVENT DETAILS

WHERE: Cooroy RSL - 25 Maple Street, Cooroy

DATE: Thursday 10 October 2019

TIME: 2 - 4.30pm

Afternoon tea provided

***** ENDS *****

**For more information contact: Jasmin Midgley, Senior Media and Communications Officer,
Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN on 5456 8100**