



# Mental Health First Aid Instructor Newsletter

**JULY 2004**

**Welcome** to the July edition of the Mental Health First Aid Instructor newsletter. This newsletter will now be distributed quarterly in an effort to keep you up to date with all the important MHFA information. If any instructor would like to contribute to future newsletters by sharing stories, photos, offering tips and suggestions for teaching, or simply providing any information you feel would be beneficial to our instructor community, you are very welcome to do so. Please forward any contributions to Betty and we will include them in the next edition.



## International News:

The MHFA program has continued on its international road to recognition and success. As many of you would know, Betty was "on leave" in Hawaii for the first three months of this year. During that time, she conducted an Instructor course in Hong Kong and the USA. It is very exciting to see the program doing so well internationally. Betty flew to Hong Kong in the first week of March and trained 5 new Instructors. Having barely recovered from that she ducked over to the USA and trained three more Instructors in Rochester, in the state of New York. There are some photos on the MHFA website [http://www.mhfa.com.au/instructor\\_courses.htm](http://www.mhfa.com.au/instructor_courses.htm)

The USA team are very enthusiastic and are currently in the process of writing a component of training for employers that addresses legal issues of mental health

problems in the workplace. They are also developing a workbook to accompany the MHFA course.

MHFA Scotland has also been busy conducting courses with the 15 Instructors trained in September last year. Betty will be heading back to Scotland towards the end of October to help conduct the first Training Course for 6 Trainers of Instructors. Betty has also been inundated with enquiries from England where there are some very keen individuals, who would like to get the program out into the community. Betty is currently looking into the possibility of visiting England after her trip to Scotland.



### Consumer Research Unit:

The Consumer Research Unit at the Centre for Mental Health Research proudly launched their new BrolgaNet website last month. The website aims to further promote consumer participation in mental health research which is the overriding aim of the unit. BrolgaNet is a network of people who have an interest in involving consumers as active participants in mental health research and conducting quality research, which gives high priority to mental health consumers. To find out more about BrolgaNet follow the links from the CMHR website [www.anu.edu.au/cmhr](http://www.anu.edu.au/cmhr) (and check out all the wonderful things happening at the Centre whilst you are there), or go directly to the BrolgaNet website:

[www.brolganet.anu.edu.au](http://www.brolganet.anu.edu.au)



### Media Coverage:

It was wonderful to see MHFA get some media exposure last month. One of our Melbourne Instructors, Ingrid Ozols, was a guest on *George Negus Tonight (GNT)*. She featured in a special focussing on depression. Ingrid spoke about her own experiences as well as sharing information about the importance of the skills taught at a MHFA course. If you are interested in finding out more about this particular episode you can access the transcript by visiting this link:

[www.abc.net.au/gnt/profiles/Transcripts/s112543.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/gnt/profiles/Transcripts/s112543.htm)



### Website update: [\\_www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au)

Statistics indicate that the number of people visiting the MHFA website worldwide is increasing all the time. This is fantastic news as the website is a wonderful medium for getting as much information as possible out into the community. The statistics show that the number of visits almost doubled this financial year (2003-2004) with 23,000 visits in total. June 2003 saw 1,313 people visit the site, which contrasts quite remarkably with the 2,527 people who visited in June this year. So, don't forget to

let us know when you are conducting a course as we will put all relevant information up on the website. This will help get the word out and hopefully you will have increased class numbers as a result. We often get calls from people looking for courses in a particular area so it would be great to be able to direct customers to a relevant course advertised on the website.



### Relevant Research News:

Here are three Cochrane review articles of interest:

#### 1. Early Intervention for Psychosis

Some clinicians believe that early intervention in young people with a psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia will produce a better long-term outcome. Such early intervention involves detecting the disorder earlier, applying treatment more appropriate for the early phase of the disorder, and care being provided by a specialized early intervention team. A recent review looked at the evidence to see if this type of intervention did produce the benefits claimed. The reviewers found very few studies on the issue and concluded that at present it was not possible to draw any conclusion. However, there are a number of trials due to finish soon, which should allow a clearer conclusion to be drawn.

Source: Marshall M, Lockwood A. Early intervention for psychosis (Cochrane Review). In: *The Cochrane Library*, Issue 2, 2004.

#### 2. Light Therapy for Depression

Light therapy is used as a treatment for depression that varies with the seasons, particularly depression occurring in winter. However, there have been a number of studies looking at whether it also helps with depression that is not seasonal. A recent review of these studies concluded that bright light therapy might help, especially if it is used in conjunction with other treatments, is applied early in the morning, and is used in the first week of treatment.

Source: Tuunainen A, Kripke DF, Endo T. Light therapy for non-seasonal depression (Cochrane Review). In: *The Cochrane Library*, Issue 2, 2004.

#### 3. Preventing Depression After Stroke

People who have a stroke are at very high risk of developing depression. However, it has been uncertain whether the treatments that work for other cases of depression will also work following a stroke, or whether applying these treatments early can prevent depression developing. A recent review of studies on the issue found no evidence that drug therapy for the treatment or prevention of depression following a

stroke. However, psychotherapy was found to have some benefit in treating depression in stroke patients.

Source: Anderson CS, Hackett ML, House AO. Interventions for preventing depression after stroke (Cochrane Review). In: *The Cochrane Library*, Issue 2, 2004.

### Useful UPDATED Website on Anxiety

Macquarie University Anxiety Research Unit in Sydney has a very useful UPDATED website, giving information about anxiety disorders in children and adolescents and in adults. The site gives information about various types of anxiety disorders and the help available. The Unit has also developed some self-help materials and resources for professionals which can be ordered from the website.

The address for this website is: [www.psy.mq.edu.au/MUARU/](http://www.psy.mq.edu.au/MUARU/)

### Article of historical curiosity:

#### 1. First Aid in **acute panic** states.

American Journal Of Psychotherapy 5 1951, 367-371

This article dates back 50 years yet refers to '**Mental First Aid**'

The abstract reads as follows:

*Simple ways of dealing with acute panic states include an understanding attitude, oral gratification, first-aid hypnosis, and first-aid catharsis. Such Mental First Aid may prevent the development of deeper neurotic involvements.*

At least we can say that MHFA methods have improved over the past 50 years.



### MHFA Babies

Congratulations to the following instructors and their families, who have been busy with more than organising their latest MHFA course!

- Tony Paton is the proud Dad of **Lachlan Thomas** born in November last year.
- Melissa Lyons is the proud Mum of a beautiful baby **girl**.

And stay tuned for baby updates from:

- Sheree Masling
- Susannah Madden and
- Mari Todd

who are all eagerly awaiting their new bundles of joy.



## Awards

Congratulations to Betty Kitchener who has been awarded the ANU Vice-Chancellor's Award for Community Outreach. This award recognises University staff who "volunteer their time, skills and expertise to the wider community, in excess of the normal requirements of their substantive position". So, in other words, it is awarded to dedicated staff members who give their all; above and beyond the call of duty. Well done Betty! <http://www.mhfa.com.au/awards.htm>



## Reminders:

### **Mental Health Week**

Don't forget Mental Health Week runs from Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October - Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2004. This is a great time to organise a course and participate in this fantastic awareness-raising event. The theme for this year's World Mental Health Day is: *The relationship between physical & mental health: co-occurring disorders*. For more information on World Mental Health Day visit the World Federation for Mental Health website at: [www.mhf.com/wmhd/WMHD2004English.pdf](http://www.mhf.com/wmhd/WMHD2004English.pdf)

### **Courses**

As previously mentioned, please let us know what courses you have planned, where they are held, how many people attend etc. It is very helpful if you can send back the feedback sheets as well. The more information we have, the more we can do to help you advertise the courses and ensure that you are kept up to date and informed. We estimate that over 7,500 people have now attended a MHFA course.

### **Mental Health First Aid Instructor Refresher Weekend**

[http://www.mhfa.com.au/mhfa\\_refresher\\_course\\_flyer\\_04.pdf](http://www.mhfa.com.au/mhfa_refresher_course_flyer_04.pdf)

There has been a fantastic response to the inaugural Instructor Refresher Weekend with a full house of 40 Instructors attending. Acceptances for this have now unfortunately closed. A reminder of the important details:

**Dates:** 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2004

**Times:** 9.30am - 4.30pm

**Venue:** Centre for Mental Health Research,  
The Australian National University.

This free weekend course includes two nights' accommodation at University House, Saturday and Sunday lunch and Saturday dinner at Teatro Vivaldi's restaurant.

Well, that's it for now. The next issue will be forwarded to all Instructors before Christmas and don't forget to send in any material that you would like included.

Betty & Kim

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