

### **GREETINGS FROM MELBOURNE!**

As most of you will all be aware, the MHFA Program has moved to Melbourne. My name is Leanne Northausen, Program Administrator for the MHFA Team. I am both pleased and excited to be part of such an important program! We are now operating through [ORYGEN Research Centre](#).

*“ORYGEN is a unique organisation made up of a specialist youth mental health service, a research centre and a range of education, advocacy and health promotion activities. The overall goal of ORYGEN is to integrate knowledge gained from clinical practice and research activities to implement, and advocate for, high quality mental health services for young people.”*

*“ORYGEN Research Centre (ORC) is a comprehensive youth mental health research centre, affiliated with the University of Melbourne, Melbourne Health and the Colonial Foundation. ORC has strong ties to researchers around Australia and overseas. The range of research projects conducted focuses on the mental disorders that impact on young people. ORC research, particularly on the early phases of psychotic illness, is recognised internationally and has influenced the delivery of services in many countries.”*

### **2005 MHFA INSTRUCTOR REFRESHER WEEKEND.**

**Dates:** Saturday 22 & Sunday 23 October 2005

**Time:** 9.30am – 4.00pm

**Location:** Melbourne

**Venue:** The Treacy Conference Centre

126 The Avenue, Parkville VIC Ph: 03 8359 0101

<http://www.treacycentre.com.au/>

Parkville is a nice inner suburb of Melbourne.

**Costs:** You will need to finance your own travel and accommodation and dinner.

There are no registration fees. The weekend program and lunches will be provided free of charge.

**Accommodation:** A list of nearby accommodation will be put on your resources webpage. Can I suggest you phone the accommodation to find out how far it is to travel to the Treacy Centre. There are also a few very cheap rooms at the Treacy Centre itself –it will be first in, first served!

**Content:**

- Talks by researchers from ORYGEN Research Centre, Psychiatry Dept, University of Melbourne to update us on relevant mental health research;
- Discussions about the development of various MHFA Programs within Australia – Vietnamese, Croatian, Italian, Aboriginal and Youth.
- Info on how we are working to develop national standards for the MHFA Program;
- Sharing of MHFA Instructors' experiences;
- Try out some activities & exercises you can include in your MHFA courses.
- Discussion about personal liability insurance.
- Add pins to the MHFA Map of Australia showing where you have conducted MHFA courses.
- Optional dinner on Saturday night.
- Bring along your photos, activities and promotional material to share.

The MHFA team is very keen to welcome as many MHFA Instructors to this Weekend Refresher. We understand that time and costs will prevent some Instructors being able to attend.

To help us with the organisation, could you email us if you think you may be able to join us for this weekend? Please email Leanne Northausen, the MHFA Program Administrator: [leannen@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:leannen@unimelb.edu.au)

**COST INCREASES AS OF 1 JULY 2005**

Unfortunately the new financial year has brought some price increases:

**Materials, Postage & Handling:** Due to relocating to Melbourne the increase of postage & courier costs has increased. Please refer to the updated Order Form on your Resources Webpage.

**Instructor Training Course:** Fee is now \$2,700.00 per person

**THE LATEST RESEARCH ON MHFA PUBLISHED**

**Australian National Survey Looks At First Aid Responses**

Mental health first aid responses of the public: results from an Australian national survey Jorm AF, Blewitt KA, Griffiths KM, Kitchener BA, Parslow RA *BMC Psychiatry* 2005, 5:9 (6 February 2005)

Available online: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/content/pdf/1471-244X-5-9.pdf>

A national survey of 4000 Australian adults has examined how they would respond to someone they know and care about who has a mental disorder.

Survey participants were given a description of a person with either depression or schizophrenia and asked what they would do to help the person. Many people said they would listen to the person and encourage professional help-seeking. However, a significant minority did not even mention these basic first aid strategies. Few said they would contact a professional on the person's behalf or accompany them to a professional.

Mental health first aid responses were generally more appropriate in women than men and in participants with less stigmatizing attitudes. Participants who could correctly recognize depression or schizophrenia in the descriptions also had better first aid responses. These

results show that mental health first aid skills need improving in a number of areas. They also show that lack of knowledge of mental disorders and stigmatizing attitudes are barriers to people providing first aid.

### **Qualitative analysis of course participants' stories**

Often people who complete MHFA training tell of interesting experiences they subsequently have in applying their first aid skills. In some cases, they report major effects on someone's life because of what they have done. Such stories are important sources of information about the effects that MHFA can have. We have recently completed a research project which systematically gathered information on such experiences from 94 course participants around 20 months after completing the course. 78% of the participants reported that they had used their skills to help someone. Most reported positive effects, including being able to take practical steps that led to better outcomes than might otherwise have been the case. Training also helped people be more empathetic and have better relationships with people experiencing mental health problems. Importantly, there were no negative effects reported such as from trainees being over-confident and acting outside their capabilities. A report on the findings, which includes a range of illustrative stories, has been submitted for publication in the journal *BMC Psychiatry*.

### **WORK HAS BEGUN ON A YOUTH MHFA PROGRAM**

Adolescence is a time of life when mental health problems first become apparent. It is important that teachers and other youth workers have the appropriate skills to give first aid to these young people. To fill the need for greater skills in this area, ORYGEN Research Centre has begun work to develop a Youth MHFA manual and training course. Youth MHFA will draw largely on the content of the existing course, but will focus on mental health problems most common in young people and the resources available to help this age group. Additional modules will be added to cover eating disorders and deliberate self harm. Discussions are being held with the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services about developing a version of Youth MHFA which is suitable for training teachers in South Australian schools. The new training course should be ready around the middle of 2006.

### **ONLINE STRENGTHS & DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE**

[www.youthinmind.net](http://www.youthinmind.net)

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a brief behavioural screening questionnaire for 3-16 year olds. The SDQ has 25 items on psychological attributes – emotional, conduct problems, hyperactivity and peer relationship problems. The above website allows children, parents or teachers to fill out the SDQ online and to get an automatically generated report. This is a resource we are considering for inclusion in the Youth MHFA manual.

### **AWARD TO NOEL TREVASKIS**

Noel Trevaskis received an Order of Australia Medal recently for his work in raising awareness of mental health issues in rural Australia. Noel is the person responsible for the Pivot Scholarships which provided for the training of many rural MHFA instructors. Noel works for the company Incitec-Pivot which donated truckloads of fertilizer that were auctioned to raise money for the scholarships. Noel also raised some of the money for the Hollie Jackes Memorial Scholarships.

## **NEW NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SURVEY PLANNED**

In 1997 a National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing was carried out in Australia. This survey is the source of basic statistics about mental disorders which are quoted in the MHFA course and manual. The results are now nearly a decade old, so it is fortunate that the Australian Department of Health and Ageing has decided to fund a new National Survey. Exact details are not known yet, but the survey is likely to be carried out late in 2006.

## **INTERNATIONAL MHFA NEWS**

Scotland's  
mental health  
first aid



### **SCOTTISH MHFA (SMHFA)**

<http://www.healthscotland.com/smhfa/>

The Scottish MHFA Program was launched nationally on 20 June 2005. SMHFA is being rolled out across Scotland by NHS Health Scotland, as part of the work of the Scottish Executive's national programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being. Already 70 people have been trained as SMHFA Instructors. Over the next three years, 300 SMHFA Instructors will be trained. By 2008 a target of 40,000 people in Scotland will have completed the 12-hour course.



### **MHFA MANUALS FOR WEWAK & GOROKA IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

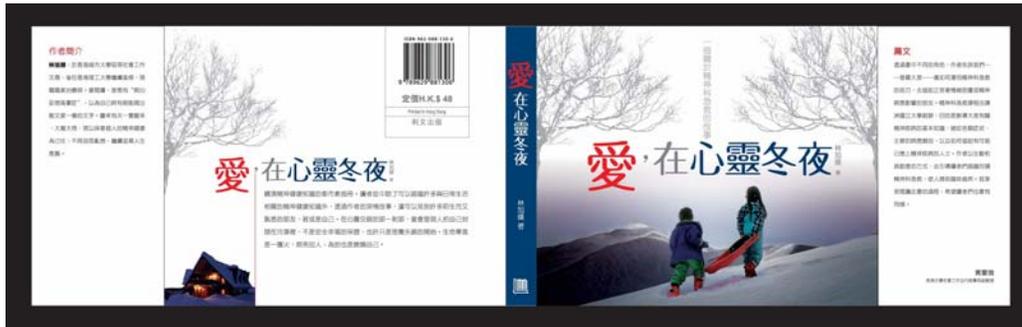
Mercy Centre Lavington Ltd in southern NSW has provided some MHFA manuals to two areas in Papua New Guinea: Wewak & Goroka. Some staff members from the Centre conducted training with the MHFA manuals in April of this year with the local people whom they call Community Based Rehabilitation Officers. These people then went back to their villages with at least a challenge to their traditional thinking of people with mental health issues being "longlong" - possessed by evil spirits and worthy of being exiled from the community. It is hoped that a little information and a few skills will assist in reducing fear and empowers families and community members.

### **MHFA THEME FOR CHINESE ROMANCE NOVEL**

One of the MHFA instructors in Hong Kong, Mr Angus Lam Yuk Kit, has recently published a romance novel in Chinese which communicates the principles of mental health first aid. The title of the novel translates into English as: "Love Can Still Be Found even in the Winter of Your Life" and the spine of the book says "A Story About Mental Health First Aid". The story concerns some people who do a MHFA course to learn how to help a friend with a mental health problem and their relationship with the instructor. Betty Kitchener and Tony Jorm have written a foreword for the novel.

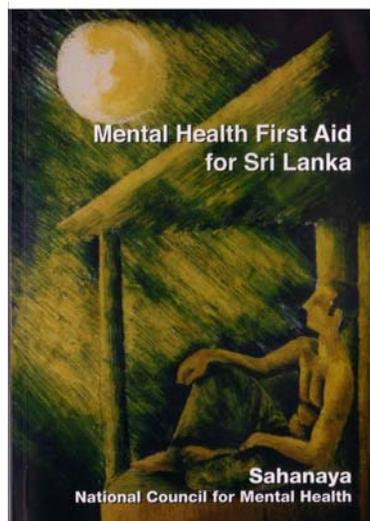
To order this novel, you can do it online in Chinese: [www.cp1897.com](http://www.cp1897.com).

Alternatively you can purchase from the author for HKD32.00 plus P&P:  
[arrowangus@yahoo.com.hk](mailto:arrowangus@yahoo.com.hk)



### MHFA MANUAL MODIFIED FOR SRI LANKA

I was thrilled to receive in the post the other week a book titled” Mental Health First Aid for Sri Lanka”. The manual has drawn heavily from our MHFA manual, with due acknowledgement and has been modified and published by Sahanaya, the National Council for Mental Health in Sri Lanka <http://www.sahanaya.lk/>



### CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE (CALD) MHFA PROJECT

Thanks to funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, the MHFA manual and course have been successfully adapted to meet the needs of Vietnamese, Italian and Croatian communities in Australia.

MHFA staff worked with a Transcultural Mental Health Reference Group as well as Vietnamese, Croatian and Italian Working Groups to make cultural modifications to the manual and course which have been translated into the three languages.

A CALD Train-the-Instructor Course was conducted in Canberra during March. Ten instructors from the Vietnamese, Italian and Croatian communities were trained as well as a Spanish speaking Columbian instructor. The instructors conducted courses in their

respective communities in Canberra during April 2005. All courses were well attended and were positively evaluated by course participants and the CALD instructors.

The CALD instructors will continue to conduct MHFA courses using the translated materials in their respective communities. We are currently examining ways of building on the current project and expanding the MHFA course to other CALD groups.

#### **MHFA POSITION VACANT**

##### **Tasmanian State Coordinator of Mental Health First Aid - Australian Red Cross**

The Australian Red Cross (Tasmania Division) is advertising to recruit a new State Coordinator of their MHFA program (3.5-4 days per week). The position will involve both the administration and marketing of the program in Tasmania as well as conducting some training and other mental health promotion activities and supervising casual instructors. It is hoped this position will be advertised in Tasmanian papers very soon. If you would like to receive an information pack as it becomes available, please contact Anna Birch on 03 62356015 or email [abirch@redcross.org.au](mailto:abirch@redcross.org.au)