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SHOAL BAY & ANNA BAY MEDICAL CENTRES

Mental Health

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Mental Health

Many of us will suffer from mental health problems at some stage in our lives and if we don't it is probable that someone close to us will.

The most common problems we see in General Practice are anxiety disorders followed by depression but we also frequently encounter post traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder, phobias, OCD and schizophrenia

Some mental health problems are temporary and can be cured. Others are chronic and management is about controlling symptoms and preventing relapse. Patients with mental illness may have co-existent drug and alcohol problems and those need to be addressed for treatment to work. We believe in whole person (holistic) care and try to provide this for all our patients. Medication for mental health conditions may be part of the answer for some patients, for others counselling or other psychological therapy may be of more benefit and some require both.

Some people may be reluctant to admit they might have a mental illness. Depressed patients often blame themselves and somehow feel they should be able to pull themselves together. The fact that they cannot should indicate there is a problem. Evidence suggests that early intervention is important and we encourage patients who are worried to see their doctor. We also need to know if you are worried about a family member. Often we can develop a plan—even without seeing the patient who is sick. Fortunately over the last few years there has been a lot of discussion in the media about mental health in Australia and people are generally more open than they used to be when they develop a mental illness.

If you are worried about your mental health, it usually takes a bit of time to sort out. We suggest you make a **long appointment** to see your doctor and unless you are very unwell physically we should use that appointment exclusively to focus on your mental health and develop a shared management plan.

Your doctor may suggest that you need a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan. This involves assessment and writing a formal management plan which is then given to you. Once the plan is complete it will entitle you to have Medicare supported treatment (up to 10 sessions per year) with an accredited psychologist or mental health social worker. We are fortunate to have Ron Farrell, Katherine Pacey and Pat Bowditch working in our practice filling these roles. The doctors have a close relationship with these therapists and care is often shared with them. Very difficult problems may however require specialist input from a psychiatrist and we can arrange this.

Suicide

Tragically some depressed patients feel so awful that they feel they have to end their lives. Often depressed people feel "that life is not worth living" but if it goes further than that something is seriously wrong. An important problem has become an **urgent** one and if you or someone you know develop strong suicidal feelings **don't ignore the alarm bells** - Get help straight away.

If the surgery is closed –phone the mental health team on **1800655085**

OR



OR



who have two services:

Hunter Headspace for those under 25 year olds on **49311000** and

Kaiyu for over 25 year olds on **49158600**.

OR



On **1800 55 1800**