

Supporting mental health

Almost half (45%) of Australians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime (AIHW 2021), with anxiety, depressive and substance use disorders the most common. Mental disorders, particularly depression, account for the highest burden of global disability, and increase the risk for many types of chronic health conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease. More than \$10.6 billion was spent on mental health in Australia in 2018-19.

Even before the Productivity Commission's inquiry into the mental health sector and the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Deakin University had long recognised the need to develop and invest in innovative methods across the continuum of mental health care, from effective prevention to quality treatment and continuing care.

Our mental health researchers are ranked among the world's best, and as pioneers in new fields of psychiatry and psychology. To increase our impact, we collaborate with leading national and international partners from universities, health care providers, community and advocacy groups, and philanthropic organisations.

Please join us as together we help ease the burden of mental illness on individuals and communities in Australia and around the world.

"GMHBA Health Services has partnered with Deakin on numerous mental health research projects and commissioning of literature reviews. These collaborations have assisted us greatly to enhance the evidence base and quality of our strategic and clinical service offerings to our members and patients."

Dr Sarah Leach, General Manager Health People and Community, GMHBA.

Developing prevention interventions

Led by Professor Craig Olsson, researchers within Deakin's Centre for Social and Early Emotional Development (SEED) are developing programs to prevent complex mental health problems in children and adolescents, with a particular focus on those with neurodevelopmental disorders (ADHD and autism), histories of relational trauma or significant medical trauma.



Associated research within the Mind-Body Research in Health Laboratory (MiRth) is investigating the impact of mind/body practices such as relaxation, yoga and mindfulness on a range of psychological health outcomes, including stress, anxiety, mood and depression. SEED researchers are also developing online platforms to deliver information, resources and therapeutic-based strategies to assist people in managing their mental health and wellbeing and break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

At the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), researchers are developing a home-based physical activity intervention to improve postnatal mental health in new parents. Findings from this research will inform the implementation of effective, sustainable and evidence-based physical activity programs to enhance mental health and wellbeing in the postnatal period.

Researchers at the Institute for Health Transformation (IHT) are studying how to prevent mental health problems in the workplace by integrating medicine, public health and psychology in mental health interventions. This approach has been developed over several years with the police and emergency services sector as well as in other work contexts and adapted in practice by Beyond Blue, WorkSafe Victoria and the World Health Organisation.

"The integrated approach model developed by Deakin's Professor Tony LaMontagne forms the basis of Beyond Blue's approach to advocating for mentally healthy workplaces. It is world leading and based on the best available principles and evidence. The framework has supported many workplaces on their mental health journey and continues to be a significant catalyst for change in the broader community."

Greg Jennings, Head of Wellness & Prevention, Beyond Blue



Delivering innovative treatments

Led by Professor Michael Berk, a world authority in psychiatry research and one of the world's most influential scientific minds according to Thompson Reuters, Institute for Mental and Physical Health and Clinical Translation (IMPACT) researchers have influenced treatment strategies around the world, including the first trials of atypical antipsychotics and lamotrigine for bipolar disorder – both now first line therapies - a world-first clinical trial of a new treatment for bipolar disorder as a disorder of energy; antidepressant treatment to reduce the core symptoms of schizophrenia; and showing lithium proves better at treating bipolar disorder than newer drugs. Thanks to being readily available, tolerable and affordable, all these treatment discoveries have translated into world-wide clinical use, helping to alleviate distress for millions of people.

The world leading research of Deakin's Food and Mood Centre provides evidence that improving people's diets can effectively treat depression and anxiety. Led by Professor Felice Jacka OAM, the Centre's work has influenced clinical guidelines in psychiatry in Australia and elsewhere and continues to influence policy and practice around the globe. Current projects include exploring human gut bacteria (the microbiome) and mental and brain health across the lifespan, intervention studies that examine diet and nutrition-based treatments for mental and neurological conditions and trials of lifestyle-based mental health care models in real world mental health settings.

Working with researchers at the Black Dog Institute, Deakin's globally-renowned artificial intelligence experts are pioneering a world-first approach to mental health treatment using adaptive experimental design to optimise treatment for people experiencing psychological distress. Developed by ARC Laureate Fellow Alfred Deakin Professor Svetha Venkatesh and her team at Deakin's Applied Artificial Intelligence Institute (A²I²), this approach has the potential to fast-track findings, leading to faster and more personalised health treatments.

"Lifeblood is proud to be collaborating with Food and Mood Centre/ Deakin University to support ground breaking research into the gut microbiome and its influence on mental health"

Christopher Van Diemen, Business Design Lead Microbiome

Improving service delivery and systems

Australia's mental health system is under enormous strain and struggling to keep up with demand, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, Deakin, with Barwon Health, has established the Change to Improve Mental Health Centre of Excellence (CHIME), a translational research partnership aiming to deliver an evidence-based, consumer-centred and co-designed approach to mental health service improvement. CHIME will allow both organisations to take a leadership role in these reforms and underpin the establishment of a dynamic and world-leading listening learning mental health care system.

Deakin is also leading the Mental Health Australia General Clinical Trial Network (MAGNET), which is unlocking innovative world-class clinical trials to deliver new and better mental health treatment and support. MAGNET is a co-operative, inclusive mental health research alliance and, at a national scale, will shift Australia's approach to mental health trials, generating much-needed new therapies, lived experience leadership and strategies to enhance treatment access and the health of communities across Australia.

"The great thing about working with Deakin is the ability to access multidisciplinary expertise that brings different perspectives and skills to solve on ground challenges in mental healthcare."

Through CHIME, Barwon Health and Deakin are bringing together collaborative research teams that can include everything from psychology, psychiatry, nursing, social work, nutrition, exercise physiology, pharmacology and allied health, and are supported by world-class expertise in systems thinking and machine learning, community engagement and health economics. This drives innovation and enables research to be rapidly applied to improve outcomes for people experiencing mental illness."

Steve Moylan, Clinical Director Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol Services, Barwon Health

If you'd like to join Deakin and our partners as we work to solve some of the biggest problems we face in treating and preventing mental illness, contact:

Professor Peter Enticott,
Associate Dean (Research) Faculty of Health,
Deakin University

peter.enticott@deakin.edu.au

T +61 3 924 45504

www.deakin.edu.au/research