

TREATING COMORBID MENTAL AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS: LATEST AUSTRALIAN CLINICAL TRIAL FINDINGS

Maree Teesson¹, Amanda Baker, Katherine Mills, Frances Kay Lambkin, Paul Haber, Andrew Baillie, Helen Christensen, Max Birchwood, Bonnie Spring, Kathleen Brady.

¹*NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use, University of New South Wales*

Mental and substance use disorders account for more years of life lost due to disability than any other disorders and are second only to cardiovascular disease and cancer as leading causes of disease burden. The top 10 causes of burden of disease in young Australians (15-24 years) are dominated by mental and substance use disorders. These disorders often occur together (comorbidity), affecting more than 300,000 Australians every year. Despite the significance of these conditions, the evidence surrounding the effective treatment of co-occurring disorders is weak, limited by traditional single disorder models and treatment silos.

In 2012, the NHMRC, funded the Centre of Research Excellence in Mental Health and Substance Use (CREMS) (www.comorbidity.edu.au) to build research capacity in this area. This centre represents a world first, bringing together the largest concentration of nationally and internationally recognised comorbidity researchers. The centre brings together leading research academics from four Australian universities (UNSW; University of Newcastle; University of Sydney; and Macquarie University) and three international universities (University of Birmingham, UK; Northwestern University Medical School, USA; and the Medical University of South Carolina, USA). The CRE provides the opportunity for researchers currently working in diagnostic silos (addiction, depression, anxiety and psychosis) to share skills, innovations in treatment and research approaches, synergise data collection and establish collaborative data bases. Over the last 10 years Australia has been leading the way in developing new and effective treatments for comorbidity. We have made significant inroads in preventing harms. In this presentation I will share the results of this Australian research and efforts to disseminate the findings so that Australians can have access and benefit