



## Editorial

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The Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health (AeJAMH) is now in its fifth issue and making an important contribution to the growing body of work on promotion, prevention and early intervention (PPEI) for mental health.

The population health approach that underpins PPEI acknowledges the range of influences on mental health and wellbeing. These include biological, psychological and social factors and, more broadly, their interactions with environmental and economic factors. 'Mental health' is not just the preserve of the health sector: to promote mental health, to prevent the onset of mental health problems and to intervene early in mental disorder, a range of disciplines, sectors, groups and individuals must necessarily be involved.

This approach is adopted to varying degrees in mental health policy documents that consider the broad spectrum of mental health interventions, such as the first and second National Mental Health Plans (Australian Health Ministers, 1992; 1998), but is firmly endorsed in documents which focus specifically on PPEI, such as the National Action Plan 2000 and its companion Monograph (Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, 2000a; 2000b).

AeJAMH's contributors, readership, editorial board and assessment panel similarly reflect the multidisciplinary, population approach to PPEI for mental health. Together, their backgrounds and interests include: public health, psychology, sociology, social work, nursing, psychiatry, education, counselling, consumer issues, carer issues, indigenous issues, transcultural mental health, health promotion, and community development. We are working towards increasing the representation from other disciplines as the journal develops, and as interest in PPEI for mental health grows nationally and internationally.

The interdisciplinary collaborations that are fostered by a population health approach to mental health are necessary and often rewarding, but can equally present ideological and methodological challenges. In a guest editorial for this issue of AeJAMH, Louise Rowling discusses such challenges in relation to school mental health promotion, exploring the 'often contrary ontological and epistemological positions' of the mental health and education sectors.

In the rest of this issue, we present two mini-themes. The first has a 'consumer' focus and comprises papers addressing the topical issues of recovery, rehabilitation, and reduction of stigma. Recovery and rehabilitation are typically identified with the 'treatment end' of the spectrum of interventions for mental health problems and disorders (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994). However, both can be conceptualised as fitting within the PPEI framework in that they contribute to overall quality of life and ideally occur within health promoting environments.

Gaynor Ellis and Robert King explore recovery focused interventions for mental health. They describe preliminary work on a new instrument they have developed to assess the perceptions of recovery held by mental health consumers and their case managers, with a view to establishing more effective and collaborative working relationships.

Janki Shankar and Fran Collyer explore the vocational rehabilitation needs of people with a mental illness. They propose that low job retention rates often reported for people with mental illness may have more to do with lack of workplace support and the uninspiring nature of the work itself, than with psychiatric disabilities and work skills. They conclude that employers and vocational rehabilitation workers need to be more aware of the needs, and often underestimated abilities, of people returning to the workforce.

Cynthia Stuhlmiller looks at the stigma that continues to surround mental health and illness. Her lively paper describes and evaluates an 'adventure camp' that brought together mental health consumers, nursing students and teaching staff as part of a university course in mental health nursing. She reports that the experience allowed the students to learn from consumers and to challenge some of their own stereotyped views of mental illness.

The other mini-theme for this issue is 'workplace bullying', and we present the final part of our symposium of chapters from *Mental Health and Work: Issues and Perspectives* (Morrow, Verins & Willis, 2002).

Lyn Turney looks at the impact of workplace bullying on mental health, focussing on the 'professions and quasi-professions where legitimate power becomes the vehicle for invisible bullying practices'.

Charmaine Hockley presents a summary of her extensive research on the impact of workplace violence on 'third party victims', ie colleagues and family members. She proposes an urgent need to provide mental health promotion in the workplace, along with strategies for education and policy.

## References

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