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Establishing an evidence dissemination and implementation unit to support new, multi-disciplinary mental health services in using evidence and guidelines in practice

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Background: Over 75% of serious mental health and substance use disorders commence before the age of 25, and almost 1 in 3 young people will experience an episode of mental ill health by 25 years. However, young people traditionally have had poor access to treatment, and many that do seek help fail to receive an effective treatment. For this reason, ensuring that young people with mental health issues receive evidence based best practice is a high priority. In 2006 a government-funded initiative was launched in Australia to deliver improvements in the mental health, social wellbeing and economic participation of young people aged 12-25, including the establishment of 30 new youth-friendly services. These services focus on providing enhanced primary care and mental health and substance use treatments, delivered by a range of medical and allied health professionals.

Purpose: To support these services and professionals to deliver best, evidence based care, a national evidence dissemination and implementation unit was established. This paper presents the unit's model for supporting best practice and the lessons learned from the establishment of the unit.

Methods: The unit focuses on four key areas: 1. 'Mapping' and disseminating existing evidence 2. Creating 'user friendly' evidence summaries in key topics, 3. Providing evidence implementation support and advice, and 4. Conducting innovative clinical research.

Results: This paper outlines the methods and principles underpinning each area of the unit's work. This includes building an understanding of each of the services organisational 'readiness' to use evidence, supporting individuals to assess quality of practice, and the novel approach of evidence mapping.

Discussion: This presentation will discuss the lessons learned in developing a one-stop evidence service, the challenges faced in developing evidence based resources for a unique patient group not often specifically covered by research trials, and the issues encountered in working with multiple disciplines and workplace cultures.