



fortnightly update

Tuesday 15 June 2010

The gpa fortnightly update is posted on our website www.gpasouthgippsland.com.au
If you would like to be included on the email distribution list, please contact Mandy M at GPA on 5674 0900.

Seasonal influenza vaccine suspension continues

Australia's Chief Medical Officer has issued a new letter to immunisation providers and a media statement advising that as a precaution the suspension of seasonal flu vaccination should continue for healthy children under 5 years of age. GPs are advised to read this latest advice at <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/>

Do you know a doctor who stands out in your community?



RWAV wants to know so we can acknowledge their achievements. Nominations for the Victorian Rural Doctors' Awards are now open.

The Awards acknowledge the state's rural and regional doctors and their families and provides a great opportunity for communities to recognise their achievements. Doctors are recognised in three categories, 35 years or more service, Outstanding Contribution and a New Rural Doctor.

Visit www.rwav.com.au to nominate a Victorian rural or regional doctor who stands out in the community. Nominations close 30 July 2010.

Pain Link helpline: 1300 340 357

Pain Link is available for the cost of a local call on 1300 340 357. Pain Link is staffed by volunteers with pain who've undertaken Lifeline training. Pain Link is one way that those who live in regional areas or who are housebound can be supported by people who manage their own pain and have skills to pass on.



Carb counting workshops for pumpers



Diabetes Australia – Vic is holding new Carb Counting Workshops for Pumpers on Thursday 24 June 2010 and Thursday 2 September 2010 at their Melbourne office 570 Elizabeth Street. This hands-on half-day workshop, delivered by experienced dietitians is suitable for people with type 1 diabetes aged 18 years and over and currently using an insulin pump, or who will be starting on a pump within six months. Please note: the workshop does not cover the operations and features of various pumps. Visit Diabetes-Vic [website](#) for more information.

National Diabetes Week 2010

Diabetes Australia – Vic will launch a new campaign on Sunday 11 July 2010 to mark the start of National Diabetes Week. This year the campaign theme is **PREVENT type 2 diabetes and AVOID kidney damage**. Campaign resources are available in the form of brochures, postcards and posters, and can be ordered by contacting Amber Osborn on 9667 1783 or emailing aosborn@diabetesvic.org.au

CPD event 16th June - Immunisation

An Immunisation CPD event will be held at the Austral Hotel (top pub) in Korumburra on Wednesday 16th June. The evening starts at 7pm and the presenter will Rosemary Morey from the Department of Health. A two course meal and drinks provided. Please register ASAP to Rhett at the division on 5674 0900 or email r.mclennan@gpasouthgippsland.com.au

Fortnightly Edition

General Practice Alliance – South Gippsland 5674 0900 www.gpasouthgippsland.com.au

RCNA Community and Primary Healthcare Nursing Conference 24-26 October 2010: Call for abstracts

The RCNA Community and Primary Health Care Nursing Conference Scientific Committee is calling for abstracts, reflecting the diversity of practice and research areas, which profile: models of primary health-care; innovation; leadership; future reforms.

Further information contact Margaret Whitrow, Events Manager p: 1800 061 660 e: events@rcna.org.au
w: www.rcna.org.au/conferences/cphcc/welcome

Mental Health

Judy Tiziani
Mental Health Coordinator

Research finds suicide attempt survivors not provided with adequate care

For further information please contact mentalhealth@racgp.org.au or telephone 03 8699 0599

A new research study by SANE Australia reveals a concerning lack of follow up treatment for people with a mental illness who have attempted suicide.

The research surveyed people diagnosed with a mental illness who had attempted suicide, or had self harmed, on their views of what support helped, or would have helped at this time, and what they do to try to ensure they stay safe.

The key findings, published in *Research Bulletin 11: Suicide, Self-harm and Mental Illness*, were:

- 30% of respondents were not referred for ongoing mental health treatment after a suicide attempt
- 57% were not offered psychological therapy after a suicide attempt
- 80% were not provided with a crisis plan of what to do if they felt suicidal in the future.

These findings are extremely worrying. We know that people with mental illness are already at high risk for suicide, and those who have made a suicide attempt are even more vulnerable. We also know what can help reduce the risk, yet many people who have survived a suicide attempt appear to be left to fend for themselves.

All people with a mental illness who make a suicide attempt should be referred for ongoing mental health treatment, but our research finds that almost one in three are not. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents were not offered psychological therapy, which can play a valuable part in reducing suicidal thinking. This best practice care is unfortunately not being provided and it's putting people's lives at risk.

The research also highlights the preventive strategies respondents find helpful when feeling suicidal or about to self harm. Almost three-quarters of respondents (73%) talked to someone about their suicidal thoughts, and 57% had contacted a helpline when feeling suicidal – this is very encouraging. Talking about thoughts and feelings is extremely valuable. Respondents told us that reaching out to friends or helplines not only reduced their risk of trying to take their own life but also led to getting help.

Thirty-eight percent of respondents also reported that walking or other physical exercise was a helpful coping strategy. Spending time with friends, having an occupation, or attending a day program were also noted as being important to improved mental health.

SANE Recommendations

Early intervention

The strong relationship between mental illness and suicide needs to be taken into account by policy makers and service providers to help reduce suicide through early intervention.

Reducing stigma

The community should be encouraged to talk openly and responsibly about self harm and suicide with care and sensitivity.

Ongoing support

As a matter of course, health professionals dealing with patients who have attempted suicide or have self harmed should help develop a simple plan in case the occasion arises when the person feels at risk again. This plan should include basic advice on how to respond and stay safe, a contact number to call, and details of relevant helplines.

Best practice treatment

Within any healthcare setting, people who are vulnerable to suicide or self harm should routinely receive best practice treatment. This includes patients having access to psychological therapies and doctors having access to specialist suicide prevention services for GPs. Promotion of physical exercise is also recommended to reduce stress and depressed mood.

Research Bulletin 11: Suicide, Self harm and Mental Illness can be downloaded from the Research area of the SANE website at www.sane.org