



PRESS RELEASE

From Nuremberg to Australia: a best-practice model for suicide prevention goes “down under”

Leipzig/Perth – June 29, 2017: Globally, approximately 800,000 people die by suicide every year. In Germany, about 10,000 suicides occur annually. As a measure of suicide prevention, the “Research Network on Depression and Suicidality” a predecessor of the German Depression Foundation and developed a 4-level intervention approach. This model is well-established in Germany and in Europe and will be introduced in Australia soon. Its aim is to improve the care for those suffering from depression and prevent suicidal behavior.

“Only a minority of people suffering from depression receive treatment that complies with current guidelines. Not only shortages in health care capacity and misdiagnoses, but also hopelessness, lethargy and feelings of guilt that come with depression keep those affected from seeking professional help”, explains Prof. Dr. Ulrich Hegerl, president of the German Depression Foundation. Under his leadership, the “Research Network on Depression and Suicidality”, which was supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research from 1999 until 2009, developed a 4-level approach for suicide prevention.

This approach includes cooperation with general practitioners who join workshops and receive training materials like screening questionnaires or information materials; public awareness and education components via PR-campaigns; workshops for community facilitators such as teachers, caregivers, police officers and journalists; as well as offering self-help activities and information materials to support patients and relatives.

The 4-level approach was first tested within a pilot project named the “Nuremberg Alliance Against Depression” between 2001 and 2003. A significant decrease in suicidal behavior by 24% was observed during this 2-year implementation phase. Based on these outcomes and in cooperation with the German Depression Foundation,, the program was disseminated and adopted in more than 80 German regions and cities, now called regional “Alliances against Depression”.

This success is also noticeable on the international level: since 2004, the approach was further optimized by the EU-funded „European Alliance Against Depression ([EAAD](#))“ and to date, more than 25 countries have introduced the 4-level approach. This year, three Australian states (Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland) became new members of the alliance and decided to implement the model.



Suicide rates in Western Australia currently account for 12.6 per 100,000 inhabitants. For the Aboriginal communities, suicides rates are twice as high as the national average. In order to further extend educational work and health promotion on depression and suicidality, the Western Australian Primary Health Alliance ([WAPHA](#)) has agreed to implement the 4-level approach. The program will be incorporated into their existing suicide prevention program led by the commonwealth government, and establishing three regional alliances in Western Australia.

“The membership to the EAAD gives us access to a proven program that empowers local communities to take action against depression and in doing so, improve the health and wellbeing of communities”, states Dr. Daniel Rock, general director of WAPHA.

Hence, the German Depression Foundation and European Alliance Against Depression welcome their current guest Craig McAllister, who works as project manager for WAPHA. Mr. McAllister wants to gain insight into the intervention concept and current projects such as the [iFightDepression Tool](#) and the [online platform for discussion](#). “I thank Prof Hegerl and his dedicated team for welcoming me so warmly and sharing valuable insights into how the EAAD framework has successfully reduced the rates of suicide in Germany. I am excited by the prospect of adapting this model to the Australian context.”

The European Alliance Against Depression won the European Health Forum Award on October 5, 2007 at the European Health Forum Gastein (EHFG) in Austria. The multi-level intervention is recommended in the World Health Organization’s (WHO) suicide prevention report. Moreover, the concept was mentioned in the Green Book for Mental Health of the European Commission (2005).

Further information:

<http://www.eaad.net/>

<http://phexchange.wapha.org.au/perth-south-phn-mental-health-lead-site>

A portrait of Prof. Dr. Ulrich Hegerl can be downloaded here:

<https://www.deutsche-depressionshilfe.de/presse-und-pr/downloads>

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