



St George Division of  
General Practice

**Building Collaborative Partnerships-  
Mental Health Nurse Incentive (MHNI) Program a partnership between  
St George DGP and the St George MH Service**

The St George Division of General Practice has successfully implemented a Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program based on a shared care model with the St George Mental Health Services.

An increasingly dire need for this model was evidenced by waiting lists for Mental Health Case Management and recurrent presentations to Accident and Emergency from mental health patients residing within the area.

A Service Agreement was negotiated between the St George Division of General Practice and the St George Mental Health Service which included the obligations of all relevant stakeholders. The responsibilities of the Division included fund holding, coordinating the program and assisting General Practitioners in meeting the objectives of the program.

The program criteria provided a guide to minimum standards for the position and the Area Health Service combined local Clinical Nurse Consultant and Credentialing requirements to the criteria making the standard for applications more comprehensive.

The Mental Health (MH) Nurse is primarily based at the Division but also works at other area health locations. (Hurstville and Rockdale) This allows for program guidelines, data and documentation requirements for both the area and the Division to be achieved.

The St George MH Service provides professional and clinical support, manages safety protocols and insurance coverage appropriate to the MH Nurse.

The MH Nurse was employed in November 2008 and has been successful in obtaining and managing a full case load of 29 patients.

Data which is presently being collected for evaluation and comparison includes:

- Symptoms through the Health Of the Nation Online System(HONOS)
- Bed days both psychiatric and medical.
- Referrals back to community mental health including Acute Care referrals and
- Number of GP's involved in the program.

The MH Nurse has overall found it to be a rewarding experience, advocating for consumer driven care away from the public health sector and receiving positive feedback from both clients and GPs.

GP's have gained support with improved Mental Health Treatment Plans, call back and case management services for patients, smooth facilitation of emergency psychiatric admissions and increased availability of mental health providers outside of GP clinic times.

Area health has gained another discharge route which has improved service capacity and delivery across the system.

Demand has indicated the need for the expansion of this service. Currently there are approximately 50 clients on the waiting list from Adult and Older Mental Health Services.

The strength of this partnership continues to grow. It is hoped that this position could be enhanced to the benefit of the St George Hospital and the St George Community suffering from Mental Ill Health. Negotiations are presently underway to bring this enhancement to fruition.

In summary, this is a model that works by keeping GPs in control, keeping patients out of the public health system and is consumer driven.

This is a model that is easily duplicated across all Divisions. The groundwork has been fine tuned and our Mental Health Nurse and Program Officer are approachable for discussions and inquiries.

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