

MEDIA RELEASE

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MENTAL HEALTH CRUNCH TIME: TACKLING PHYSICAL HEALTH IMPROVES OUTLOOK

Key organisations join forces to tackle impact of chronic disease among people living with mental illness

People living with mental illness could add years to their lives with the right support to get their physical health on track, according to the Dietitians Association of Australia, Exercise & Sports Science Australia and the Australian Psychological Society who have issued a joint position statement.

The joint position statement ‘Addressing the physical health of people with mental illness’ underlines the importance of diet and exercise, along with psychological treatment and medical treatment, for people living with a mental health disorder.

Recent Australian research shows people living with serious mental illness are two to three times more likely to suffer from diabetes, and their rate of cardiovascular disease is almost four times that of the general population.

Mental illness, such as depression, is also an independent risk factor for developing coronary heart disease.

“By improving diet and exercise, side effects and complications of these chronic conditions can be reduced. With increased disease rates in people living with mental illness, support from Accredited Practising Dietitians and Accredited Exercise Physiologists is crucial,” says Gabrielle Maston, spokesperson for the Dietitians Association of Australia.

“The stress of dealing with mental and physical health issues can be overwhelming. Psychologists can provide evidence-based psychological interventions for mental health conditions, as well as helping people change their lifestyle behaviours that contribute to lower quality of life and chronic disease,” says Australian Psychological Society President Anthony Cichello.

The position statement highlights the importance of integrated, holistic healthcare for people living with mental illness, and stresses that strong referral networks and collaboration between health professionals within the mental health treatment team are needed.

“Our associations and our members are well placed to help those living with mental illness become more physically healthy, which in turn will help them to live longer and enjoy a better quality of life,” says Anita Hobson-Powell, Chief Executive Officer of Exercise & Sports Science Australia.

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For further information, or to organise an interview, contact:

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Attachment: Joint position statement ‘Addressing the physical health of people with mental illness’.

Note to Editors: The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the professional body representing dietitians nationally. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veteran Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. For more information visit www.daa.asn.au. For the Media section on the DAA website contains DAA's media releases and position on topical nutrition issues in the media.