

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The Cost of Adolescent Mental Health Issues

Professor Beverley Raphael and Professor Louisa Jorm from the School of Medicine are exploring the current and future social and economic costs of not dealing adequately with child and adolescent mental health problems, through an Australian Health Management (ahm) Research Project Grant.

'The value of preventative health measures has recently been highlighted by the Productivity Commission study of the potential benefits of national reforms in health promotion and disease prevention,' says Professor Raphael. 'The report estimates that 97,000 deaths could be avoided by preventative health measures, and workforce participation could be significantly improved if the health consequences of mental illness could be reduced. Mental illness is one of the most prevalent diseases in the under 15 age group, and it is thought that early intervention, prevention and health promotion in children and adolescents could significantly lower the burden of disease and have flow-on effects later in life, enabling those children and young people to emerge into adulthood healthier and with a greater capacity for participation in employment and community.'

In conjunction with their partner organisation, the medical insurance company, ahm, which supports health and medical research, the research team will review current evidence on the potential health and financial cost implications of mental disorders in childhood, and develop models of how these costs will affect an individual's adult-life in the future. This information will be used to assess the potential human and economic savings that could be achieved through the implementation of an effective



prevention and treatment service for children and early adolescents.

This project will contribute to strengthening Australia's social and economic wellbeing and a healthy start to life by contributing to research development nationally for child and adolescent mental health policies and programs, thus improving economic and health outcomes for all Australians.

Project Title: Burden of Disease Trajectories for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Problems Current and Future: Human and Economic Costs
Funding has been set at: \$212,164
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March 2009