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MEDIA RELEASE

***PharMIbridge* RCT training for pharmacists in Northern Sydney**

Training for pharmacists in Northern Sydney involved in the Bridging the Gap between Physical and Mental Illness in Community Pharmacy (*PharMIbridge*) Randomised Control Trial (RCT) will be held in Northern Sydney on 24-25 February 2021.

The *PharMIbridge* RCT is a collaboration between the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, Griffith University and the University of Sydney, aimed at enhancing the way community pharmacists support people living with severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI). The RCT is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health as part of the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

Professor Amanda Wheeler from Griffith University, who is leading the trial said that “People living with a mental illness are particularly vulnerable to isolation and the current pandemic has meant that many have struggled not only with their mental wellbeing but also managing their physical health. Regular check-ups and timely follow-up on new symptoms or issues with doctors, dentists and other allied health professionals has been hard with lockdowns and the loss of face-to-face interactions. *PharMIbridge* RCT offers an important opportunity for pharmacists to check-in with people living in the community with severe and persistent mental illness, with time to talk about their medication and health issues and support them to access the help they need.”

The *PharMIbridge* RCT, involving up to 8 community pharmacies in Northern Sydney, will test the effectiveness of a person-centred, goal-oriented, and flexible pharmacist-led support service for consumers living with SPMI, compared to a standard in-pharmacy medication review service (MedsCheck).

The *PharMIbridge* intervention involves an in-depth medicine support service delivered over six-months and aims to identify and address problems relating to psychotropic medication use or physical and psychological health concerns, with an emphasis on quality of life, physical health and psychological wellbeing.

A MedsCheck involves a pharmacist reviewing a consumer’s medication to improve medication use and address any medication-related questions, with a report sent to and/or discussed with the consumer’s GP.

The National President of the Guild, George Tambassis, said the Guild’s commitment to *PharMIbridge* reflected the importance of researching the impact of an increasing role of community pharmacists in mental health.

“This trial is an important initiative in determining the impact of a pharmacist’s intervention in helping people living with mental illness,” he said. “Pharmacists can be one of the first health professionals a mental health consumer will turn to for help.”

The trial is assessing the impacts of a pharmacist’s intervention and changes in consumer medication adherence and health outcomes, including quality of life, physical health, and mental wellbeing. It is also assessing the confidence and knowledge of community pharmacists to support consumers through the trial service.

Pharmaceutical Society of Australia National President, Associate Professor Chris Freeman, said as medicines experts, pharmacists play a vital role in the management of mental illness in the community.

“Pharmacists have an important role to play in supporting people who have a mental illness and are often in the frontline as a care provider, providing advice and assistance to people who may be suffering through these difficult times” A/Prof Freeman said.

The training workshop is followed by support from the Research Team over the nine months of trial implementation.

For more details, email pharmibridge@griffith.edu.au or visit griffith.edu.au/pharmibridge or call (07) 3735 8038.