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MEDIA RELEASE

New report shows economic burden of brain disorders in Australia over \$74 billion pa

Friday 15 March 2019: A newly commissioned white paper on the burden of cost of brain disorders in Australia reports the staggering economic burden associated with neurological, mental health and substance use disorders is in excess of \$74 billion. In Australia, the burden of these brain disorders accounted for 20.5% of the burden of disease, nearly twice the global figure of 11.1% illustrating the scale of the health care challenge. Substance abuse recorded the highest growth rate between 2010 and 2017 growing by 24.7%, followed by neurological disorders at 15.6% and mental health disorders by 8.6%.

The report commissioned by Mindgardens Neuroscience Network (Mindgardens), identifies the health cost in disability adjusted life years of brain disorders has increased by 13.5% in Australia since 2010.

Mindgardens, based in Sydney, Australia is an innovative organisation dedicated to clinical excellence, research and education in neurological, mental health and substance use disorders. Established in 2018, it brings together the strengths of four founding partner organisations: **Black Dog Institute, Neuroscience Research Australia (NeuRA), South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) and UNSW Sydney (UNSW)** to form the largest collaboration of scientists and clinicians in brain disorders in the southern hemisphere.

The founding partners sought to determine the current burden of disease in Australia and the associated costs that arise from the spectrum of brain disorders – neurological, mental health and substance use disorders in order to set a course for change in neuroscience models of care.

Says Professor Helen Christensen AO Interim Co-CEO of Mindgardens, “we commissioned KPMG to prepare a white paper to review the data and provide us with a clear picture of the size and scale of brain disorders in Australia. The white paper reveals the costs are staggering. Mental health disorders and suicide cost the nation over \$33 billion each year; neurological disorders cost over \$31 billion and substance use and disorders almost \$10 billion”.

The white paper titled *Review of the burden of disease for neurological, mental health and substance use disorders in Australia*, identifies the largest burden of disease is exhibited by opioid use disorders, major depressive and anxiety disorders, stroke and Alzheimer’s/dementia disorders. Relative to cancer and cardiovascular disease, these disorders do not receive overall research investment commensurate with the burden they impose on the community.

Says Professor Peter Schofield AO, Interim Co-CEO Mindgardens, “our national research agenda should align to better incorporate and prioritise these disorders and build the specific research capability to address them into the future. Our white paper also investigates the potential return on investment for already validated health interventions and indicates a number which, if adopted, would cost-effectively improve health outcomes.”

“These include online mental health programs which are highly effective in treating depression and anxiety. However, the infrastructure to put these treatments into action is weak so we need to establish an e-mental health infrastructure and shared industry/health models that could then be used to expand these cost-effective health interventions to treat and prevent these and other brain disorders,” says Prof Schofield AO.

Mindgardens plans to establish a new healthcare architecture using “Apex Clinics” that examine, simultaneously, the whole health of the person - from physical health, neurological, mental health and substance use - will encourage and support collaborative care approaches to ensure quality health care outcomes.

“The approach to care must aim to review brain disorders in totality not in isolation as many sit as comorbid disorders. Managing an individual’s needs requires a helicopter view, rather than the traditional ‘siloed’ service provision”, says Prof Helen Christensen AO.

“The release of this white paper *Review of the burden of disease for neurological, mental health and substance use disorders in Australia*, combined with other recent reports (e.g. *Investing to Save*¹) highlights how the national research agenda should be providing an evidence base from which new and improved interventions can be adopted”, says Professor Peter Schofield AO.

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GOOGLE DRIVE

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1T52YuWf6p3tyrnhdWBhr-53PnXnH7K_V?usp=sharing

Contains

- short digital content/interviews – Mpeg4
- selection of radio new grabs
- selection of images and infographics
- copy of the white paper

Question and answers

What is the Mindgardens Neuroscience Network?

A collaborative alliance of four clinical, research and education partners including, The Black Dog Institute, Neuroscience Research Australia, South Eastern Sydney Local Health District and UNSW Sydney that brings together the largest group of scientists and researchers in the southern hemisphere to create the Australian Comprehensive Brain Disorders Centre.

What will Mindgardens do?

The vision of Mindgardens is to link outstanding patient care with world-class research and clinical trials to create new models of care that will change the way we approach, diagnose, treat, monitor, and integrate services into the community to afford all Australians the best life possible.

Why is Mindgardens important to all Australians?

Mental health, neurological and substance use disorders currently account for over 20% of the burden of disease in Australia. Our burden of brain disorders is almost double that of the global figures which is extremely concerning and calls for immediate action.

What is the Mindgardens model of care?

The Mindgardens model is built around an “integrated system of care” to address physical, mental health, drug and alcohol and neurological disorders concurrently. Linkage to community care hubs provides critical time sensitive patient information, to model individual support and therapeutic adjustments that deliver a complete 360-degree picture of the patient, needs and progress.

What effective health interventions were identified in the white paper?

The white paper identified examples where high-quality evidence is available to support improved health care interventions that provide a positive return on investment (ROI). Mindgardens will implement these interventions in pilot programs to evaluate their impact in real-world clinical settings. Examples include:

- exercise therapy for neurological disorders which has an ROI of 3.9
- internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy (iCBT) which has an ROI of 2.1 for mental illness.

The positive ROIs from these interventions suggest that, in the long-term, cost savings from the investment will make a comprehensive difference to prevalence and burden of disease.

Why Sydney, Australia? – the statistics add up.

The Southern and Eastern areas of Sydney have some of the highest rates of suicide in the country. The national suicide rate is 12.6 per hundred thousand. In Randwick, the standardised rate was 20.3 in 2016. Within this local health district area, South Sydney has a rate of 18.6 and Waverley a rate of 25.4, more than twice that of Australia.

What are the aims of Mindgardens?

Mindgardens aims to become the Silicon Valley of brain disorder research, using innovation and technological solutions to develop new models of care that can be developed and tested and then rolled out into trials using best practice hubs across Australia.