Welcome to the first edition of the Western Australian Centre for Mental Health Policy Research (WACMHPR) newsletter. The WACMHPR is a State-wide resource that researches key policy and health service issues facing mental health in Western Australia.

Inside this issue we aim to provide you with an insight into just some of the projects currently underway at the WACMHPR. Our aim is to build an evidence base to guide future planning for an improved mental health system in this state. For example, we have recently completed a Review of Emergency Mental Health Services in North Metropolitan Perth that will provide a platform for future planning in the north metropolitan area. This review has been adopted as a part of the Clinical Reform process and the recently released Report on the Acute and Emergency Services Review outlines an implementation strategy.

Ensuring our work is accessible to those working in mental health is a priority for the WACMHPR. Dr Geoff Smith, Medical Director, WACMHPR, recently delivered the keynote address “Recovery, Personalisation and the Growth of the Non-Government Sector” at the Australian College of Mental Health Nurses “Symposium at the Park”.

I look forward to continuing to share with you outcomes that will improve the lives of West Australians living with mental illness.

Theresa Williams
Associate Professor

Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP)

Thanks to funding from the Mental Health Commission, the WACMHPR is currently undertaking an 18-month research project to determine the benefits of Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) compared to standard mental health treatments.

The study utilises 10 years of consumer data from the Bentley and Rockingham/Kwinana specialist EIP services against a matched comparison control group that has received standard treatment from mental health services across the metropolitan area.

Dr Geoff Smith, Medical Director, WACMHPR, said that the study would provide much needed data to inform debate about the benefits of specialist EIP.

“Despite the hope that early intervention will change the course of serious mental illness, there is debate about whether specialist early psychosis services have lived up to their promise, especially as there is growing evidence that early gains are not sustained in the long-term,” said Dr Smith.
Review of the Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL) and RuralLink

A review into the Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL) and RuralLink was initiated by the Mental Health Operations Review Committee during February. The Review sought to assess the role, function and relevance of MHERL and RuralLink to the target population and inform a debate about the future direction of emergency mental health telephone services in Western Australia.

The Review involved telephone interviews and consultation with internal and external stakeholders in Kalgoorlie, Albany, Broome and Bunbury. A draft report of the findings will be presented for feedback at a workshop with key stakeholders during July. The final report with recommendations for future service development will be presented to the Mental Health Operations Review.

Teleconferencing with community mental health staff across the Great Southern region

Adjunct Associate Professor Appointments

The University of Western Australia, School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences has recently appointed Theresa Williams, Director, WACMHPR and Dr Geoff Smith, Medical Director, WACMHPR to the position of Adjunct Associate Professor. They will continue to hold adjunct Associate Professor positions at the Centre for Research into Disability and Society at Curtin University.

Western Australian Centre for Mental Health Policy Research

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Early Intervention in Psychosis (EIP) cont.

The study is conducted in partnership with the WACMHPR, the University of Western Australian School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences (Dr Vera Morgan) and the South Metropolitan Health Services (Tracey Harrison, Teresa Stevenson, Dr Gordon Shymko and Dr Raj Tanna). Dr Deidra Young of WACMHPR, has been appointed as the Senior Analyst to work on the project. The study will be completed by the end of June 2012.

Dr Deidra Young