Go to work to improve your mental health

May 19 2014, by Gayle Mcnaught

(Medical Xpress)—Ask most people where they should learn about good mental health and they would be pretty unlikely to say their workplace. For many of us, the workplace is where we are the most stressed, anxious or depressed.

But with 60% of the population employed, and 60% of our waking hours spent working, workplaces are a prime location to base mental health education and prevention programs. Or are they?

According to Dr Sam Harvey, Consultant Psychiatrist and Head of the Workplace Mental Health Research Program at UNSW and the Black

Dog Institute, the answer is a resounding yes.

"We did a systematic search across the world to identify good quality research publications that tested the impact of depression prevention programs in different workforces," says Dr Harvey, who is also part of the School of Psychiatry.

The results of the meta-analysis, published in *BMC Medicine*, shows for the first time that evidence-based workplace depression prevention programs significantly reduced depression symptoms amongst employees.

"This tells us two things. Firstly, that the workplace is a viable location for providing universal mental health prevention programs, and secondly, it demonstrates the potential power of the workplace for spreading important public health messages and shows that we can become too focused on the potential negative aspects of work and work stress on mental health," he says.

"Due to the nature of the analysis, we weren't able to determine which interventions were most effective, although at present cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)-based interventions have the most evidence. CBT-based interventions teach workers, either in groups or individually, to better understand their emotions, thoughts and behaviours in a range of potentially stressful situations and a variety of techniques to help them cope or adapt better.

"Overall these results provide strong evidence to support the incorporation of mental health prevention strategies in workplaces as part of ongoing efforts to reduce the unacceptably high rates of mental ill health amongst working Australians."

  More information: The full report, "Preventing the development of

depression at work: a systematic review and meta-analysis of universal interventions in the workplace," is available online: www.biomedcentral.com/content/ … /1741-7015-12-74.pdf

Provided by University of New South Wales

Citation: Go to work to improve your mental health (2014, May 19) retrieved 21 May 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-mental-health.html