

Researchers eye pioneering therapy to treat personality disorders

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An international expert in the treatment of personality disorders is visiting QUT to train post graduate clinical psychology trainees in his ground-breaking therapy.

Dr Giancarlo Dimaggio, from the Centre for Metacognitive Interpersonal Therapy, in Rome, is a world renowned expert in Metacognitive Interpersonal Therapy (MIT), that aims to improve the patient's understanding of emotions and thoughts by identifying the patient's relationship patterns.

He is among the first to develop an integrative therapy focused specifically at people who suffer from "restricted" personality disorders, including people with narcissistic traits.

Professor Robert Schweitzer, from QUT's School of Psychology and Counselling, said Dr Dimaggio's work had produced "very promising" results in the treatment of complex and treatment-resistant personality disorders with QUT researchers to investigate the effectiveness of the treatment in Australia.

"A person with a personality disorder typically experiences pervasive difficulties with their relationships and sense of self. These difficulties often persist over the lifespan, and are resistant to change," Professor Schweitzer said.

"A person with [narcissistic personality disorder](#), for example, could be

described as self-absorbed and disdainful of others. They may often blame others for being inept, incompetent, or hostile.

"Unfortunately, people around them may suffer as a consequence of the person's lack of empathy.

"The treatment of people with [personality disorders](#) remains largely unexplored, particularly avoidant, narcissistic, paranoid, and dependent personality. Dr Dimaggio is among the first to demonstrate the effectiveness of psychotherapy in addressing the difficulties of this population."

Professor Schweitzer and Clinical Psychology Doctorate researcher Keely Gordon-King will be working with the Centre for Metacognitive Interpersonal Therapy to conduct further studies to examine the effectiveness of this emerging treatment.

The QUT research is believed to be the first time MIT has been trialled in Australia.

"MIT is unique, in that it combines some of the most effective techniques from various therapies in a structured framework," Professor Schweitzer said.

"It does not focus on specific symptoms or behaviour but rather repetitive interpersonal patterns and capacity for thinking about self and others.

"In numerous cases, patients treated using MIT have greatly improved their ability to form healthy relationships and gone on to live a more fulfilling life."

The QUT researchers are looking for participants for their study, which

will involve weekly therapy sessions over 12 months.

"The [treatment](#) is ideal for people who have over-regulated emotional states with little capacity to articulate their own responses and little understanding of the feeling states of others which leads to interpersonal difficulties," Professor Schweitzer said.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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