

New treatment guidelines to help Australian PTSD sufferers

July 17 2020, by Damian Glass



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New guidelines to support the treatment of people with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) were launched today by the Federal Minister for Health Greg Hunt.

The new "Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Treatment of Acute Stress Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Complex PTSD" will support high quality treatment for people with PTSD by providing a clear framework of best practice.

Australia is in the midst of an unprecedented period of stress and trauma having recently experienced drought, followed by bushfires, and now the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Researchers say this makes the release of trauma treatment guidelines very timely.

At any point in time, 4.4 percent of Australians have PTSD—that's 1.1 million people.

PTSD is the second most common mental health condition after depression. It can have a profound impact on individuals and their families.

Symptoms of PTSD include flashbacks, nightmares, being constantly on the alert, and feeling numb. Without effective treatment, people can feel overwhelmed by their problems, isolated, unable to go about their day-to-day activities, and unable to connect with their families.

The new guidelines have been developed by Phoenix Australia—Center for Posttraumatic Mental Health at the University of Melbourne with funding from the Commonwealth Government Department of Health. They have been approved by the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The guidelines are based on the highest quality research currently available, and have been developed in collaboration with a Guideline Development Group. The group comprises Australia's leading trauma experts and specialist practitioners working with people affected by trauma, and individuals with lived experience of trauma.

The guidelines are published in an innovative online "living guideline" format, which provides potential to update recommendations when there is sufficient new evidence to do so, ensuring that the advice is always current and up to date.

Phoenix Australia Deputy Director Andrea Phelps led the development of the guidelines.

Associate Professor Phelps said: "The guidelines are a vital tool for practitioners who provide care to people affected by trauma—providing guidance on delivering evidence-based treatment that will lead to better outcomes for those impacted by trauma."

Associate Professor Phelps added people with PTSD also have much to gain from the guidelines.

"People need to know that there are effective treatments for PTSD and they can get better," Associate Professor Phelps said. "We have also produced some booklets to help people understand PTSD and find out what treatments are recommended, so that they can be informed when they seek help from a health practitioner."

University of Melbourne Vice Chancellor Duncan Maskell said the guidelines are a critical resource for health practitioners and the community.

"These guidelines are world class and will be invaluable for the healthcare profession and people who have suffered trauma," Professor Maskell said.

Sharon Bown served in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) for 16 years. During that time she was diagnosed with PTSD, and recalls the challenge of trying to find effective methods to eventually overcome it.

"People who have experienced [trauma](#) need to be confident that there is a standard of treatment available to them that is effective and based in evidence," Ms Bown said. "These guidelines ensure that the information about best practice treatments is available, and that will mean better outcomes for people with PTSD."

More information: Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Treatment of Acute Stress Disorder, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Complex PTSD: [www.phoenixaustralia.org/austr ... -guidelines-for-ptsd](http://www.phoenixaustralia.org/austr...-guidelines-for-ptsd)

Provided by University of Melbourne

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