



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

3 February 2010

New Treatment Guidelines for Alcohol and Drug Problems

Health professionals will be able to better treat people with alcohol abuse problems, as well as people with coexisting alcohol and other drug use and mental health conditions thanks to two sets of guidelines released today.

The National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at the University of NSW were funded by the Australian Government to produce up-to-date, evidence-based information on the management of co-morbid drug and alcohol and mental health problems.

The guidelines include guiding principles for working with clients with co-morbid mental health problems and practical information for managing these problems, their treatment and appropriate referral processes. They draw upon the experience and knowledge of clinicians, researchers, consumers and carers.

These guidelines fill an important information gap and will be welcomed by professionals in the alcohol and other drug (AOD) sector.

Dr Katherine Mills, senior lecturer at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, said the guidelines would improve the confidence of drug and alcohol workers when dealing with complex presentations.

“More than one in three individuals with an alcohol and other drug use disorder has at least one co-occurring affective or anxiety disorder,” said Dr Mills. “This high prevalence of co- morbidity means that AOD workers are frequently faced with the need to manage complex symptoms which may interfere with their ability to treat AOD.

“The guidelines aim to increase AOD workers’ knowledge and awareness of mental health issues and improve their ability to identify such conditions.”

Also available are the updated *Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems*, developed by Sydney South-West Area Health Service and the University of Sydney with Australian Government funding. They provide information for health professionals who treat people with alcohol-related problems, providing them with a comprehensive review of the available treatment options.

These guidelines supersede the previous guidelines produced in October 2003.

Sydney South West Area Health Service, Medical Director Drug Health Services, Professor Paul Haber, said experts from around Australia were invited to provide clinicians the information they needed to offer the most up-to-date treatment for people with drinking problems.

“The guidelines show clinicians how to help their clients reduce their drinking, as well as how to reduce alcohol-related harm to themselves and others,” Professor Haber said.

Both sets of guidelines will be distributed to treatment services in hard copy.

The *Guidelines on the Management of Co-occurring Alcohol and Other Drug and Mental Health Conditions in Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Settings* are also available on the NDARC website at <http://ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/comorbidity>, as well as information about seminars for alcohol and other drug workers scheduled in each state and territory during February and March.

The *Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems* are available at www.alcohol.gov.au or by phoning (02) 6269 1080.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220

Also available for comment:

The Guidelines for the Treatment of Alcohol Problems - Sydney South West Area Health Service, Isabella Shaw, Media and communications, (02) 9515 9606

The Guidelines on the Management of Co-occurring Alcohol and Other Drug and Mental Health Conditions in Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Settings - Marion Downey, Manager Media and Communications, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre 02 9385 0180