

Healthy Minds for Country Youth: Barriers to accessing help for depression by young people in rural South Australia

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Background

- Anxiety and depression are the leading cause of burden of disease for young Australians.
- Around 20% of young people will have experienced depressive symptoms by the time they reach adulthood.
- Young people with mental health problems are reluctant to seek help from a health professional.



Aims

- To examine the barriers rural young people experience when seeking help for depression from health professionals, and
- To identify useful sources of help for depression among rural adolescents.



Methods

- A cross-sectional survey (n=74).
- Young people (aged 14-16).
- Rural area of South East South Australia.
- Survey questions were based on vignette.



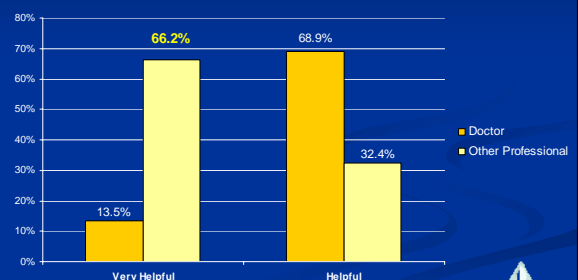
Vignette

John (Mary) is a young person who has been feeling unusually sad and miserable for the last few weeks. He (she) is tired all the time and has trouble sleeping at night. John (Mary) does not feel like eating and has lost weight. He (she) cannot keep his (her) mind on his (her) studies and his (her) grades have dropped. He (she) puts off making any decisions and even day-to-day tasks seem too much for him (her). His (her) parents and teachers are very concerned about him (her).

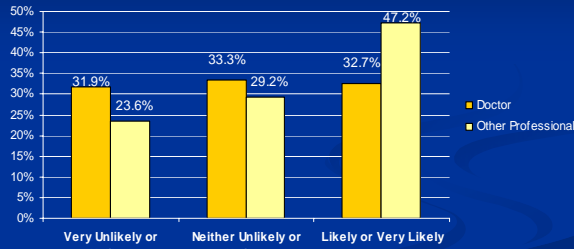
- 75% (n=54) were able to recognise depression from this vignette.



Helpfulness of doctors and other health professionals for vignette character



Likelihood of participant seeing doctor or other health professional



Perceived barriers to accessing help from doctors or other health professionals

	GPs	Other Health Professionals
I don't want to admit there is a problem	35%	41%
I have other people to talk to	51%	51%
I prefer to deal with problems on my own	59%	43%
I can't talk to the doctor / health professional on my level	35%	22%
I am ashamed to tell the doctor / health professional my problems	45%	33%
My parents will get the bill and I don't want them to know	40%	35%
I don't have my own Medicare card	49%	n/a

Sources of help for depression

Treating Professionals	Informal persons	External sources of help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking to a doctor Talking to a counsellor Talking to a psychologist Visiting a youth health service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking to friends Talking to parents Talking to a brother or sister Talking to a teacher Talking to a school counsellor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Playing sport / exercising Calling a telephone helpline Positive social activities Visiting websites
<i>mean=3.85 (p<0.001)</i>	<i>mean=4.02</i>	<i>mean=3.72 (p<0.001)</i>

Discussion

- Depression recognition was consistent with findings from other studies.
- Barriers to accessing help for depression were more personal than practical.
- Sources of help for depression were consistent with other findings.

Applications

- Mental health professionals need to be aware of the barriers young people in rural areas face when seeking help for mental health problems.
- Doctors and mental health professionals can utilise the results of this research to improve the pathways for rural young people to access mental health services.