



# MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING AND RESEARCH PROGRAM

## FRIENDS OF THE MHFA PROGRAM NEWSLETTER JULY 2011

This year is the 10th anniversary of the MHFA Program, and it is continuing to grow and evolve. 2011 data reveal that, since 2001, 1% of the Australian adult population have now attended a MHFA course, and new initiatives are underway such as the development of new programs and endorsement by various professional bodies. Read on for more details on these topics and for additional MHFA news.

### MHFA Reaches 1% of Australian Adults

This year MHFA reached a milestone. 2011 statistics show that, since the MHFA Program began in 2001, 170,000 adults have attended a MHFA course in Australia, which is 1% of the Australian adult population.

Betty Kitchener and Prof. Tony Jorm attribute the remarkable growth of MHFA over these ten years to various factors, such as building on a familiar concept of first aid, fulfilling a public need and having a strong partnership with research.

More information at [www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au) under 'About MHFA'.

### Welcome to the MFHA Team



Nataly Bovopoulos, the NEW MHFA Program Manager, started in April 2011 and is working closely with the Director, Betty Kitchener, to ensure the continuing expansion

of the program in Australia and internationally, whilst providing high level executive support, strategic guidance and operational management. Nataly brings over 8 years experience in program management within the fields of mental health promotion and psychological research within non-profit and university settings. Nataly has postgraduate qualifications in International Public Health and an honours degree in Psychology, both from the University of Sydney.

Laura Hart, teenMHFA Program Coordinator, began this new role in April 2011 and is working on the development of a new MHFA course appropriate



for adolescents, to be called teenMHFA. The teenMHFA course will be evaluated in schools around Victoria in late 2011 and early 2012 and it is hoped it will be available to Instructors by the end of next year.

Laura has a background in psychology, having completed Bachelor of Science and Arts at the University of Melbourne in 2005, and an honours degree in psychology in 2006. She is also an accredited Youth and Standard MHFA Instructor.

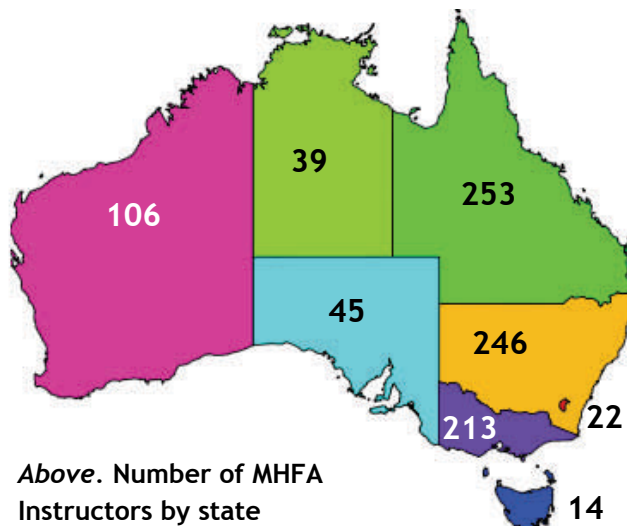
Laura recently completed her PhD at the Centre for Youth Mental Health, University of Melbourne, which was titled *MHFA for Eating Disorders: development of first aid guidelines and interventions for the public*. Her research involved the development of first aid guidelines for eating disorders, and the creation of a MHFA training program about eating disorders, based on those guidelines.

Laura has been working with the MHFA Program since 2007. Her work has included developing culturally appropriate MHFA guidelines for Aboriginal people, evaluating the Aboriginal MHFA program and developing first aid guidelines for adolescents and parents of adolescents.

### MHFA INSTRUCTOR STATS

There are currently **940** accredited MHFA Instructors across Australia. Below is a breakdown of the number of Instructors by accreditation type (some have multiple accreditations):

- Master (> 30 courses): **76**
- Standard MHFA: **661**
- Youth MHFA: **325**
- Aboriginal MHFA: **121**
- Vietnamese MHFA: **7**



## CPD Points for MHFA

Over the past few months we have been seeking to have the MHFA course endorsed by professional bodies, in particular the allied health professionals, for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points. To date, the Standard MHFA course has been endorsed by: Pharmaceutical Society of Australia; Occupational Therapy Australia; College of Mental Health Nurses; and Chiropractor's Association of Australia.

We are waiting on the outcome of applications for nurses, midwives, paramedics, social workers, fitness instructors and physiotherapists. We anticipate this will incentivize participation with these professional groups.

## MHFA for Pharmacists

By Claire O'Reilly, B.Pharm (Hons) MPS, MHFA Instructor, [claire.oreilly@sydney.edu.au](mailto:claire.oreilly@sydney.edu.au)



With medicines being a major modality of treatment for most mental illnesses and consumers frequently wanting advice on psychotropic medicines, pharmacists have an important role to play in supporting consumers with a mental illness. However, we know that mental health stigma does not restrict itself to members of the public but also extends to health professionals. The lack of education provided to pharmacists in the mental health area is commonly described as the main barrier to providing effective services to mental health consumers through community pharmacy.

Our research group from the Faculty of Pharmacy at The University of Sydney has been investigating a number of educational interventions to reduce stigma and improve pharmacists' confidence at providing services to consumers with a mental illness. In our recently published article, MHFA training was shown to reduce pharmacy students' mental health stigma, improve their recognition of mental disorders and

improve their confidence in providing services to consumers with a mental illness in the pharmacy setting. These effects were in comparison to the standard, didactic education pharmacy students receive on the mental health topic highlighting the need to adequately train our future health care professionals on mental health issues. While MHFA has been evaluated in a number of different settings, this is the first evaluation in the pharmacy setting which provides support for the provision of MHFA training to students undertaking a qualification in a health profession.

We have also begun running regular MHFA courses for pharmacists through the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the feedback I continue to receive from pharmacists highlights to me the impact MHFA has on its participants that is really making a difference in our community.

**Full article citation and abstract for this 'Controlled trial with pharmacy students 2011' available here:**

[www.mhfa.com.au/cms/evaluation-publications](http://www.mhfa.com.au/cms/evaluation-publications)

## MHFA International



[www.mhfa.com.au/cms/mental-health-first-aid-international](http://www.mhfa.com.au/cms/mental-health-first-aid-international)

It is amazing to realise that, within just 10 years from its humble beginnings in 2001, the MHFA Australia Standard Manual and training course have now been adapted by mental health organisations in the following countries:

Scotland (2003); Hong Kong (2004); Canada, England, Finland, Singapore, (2006); Wales (2007); Japan, New Zealand (Maaori); USA (2008); Northern Ireland, South Africa (2009); China, Nepal, Sweden (2010).

Our 14-hour Youth MHFA course (adults helping adolescents) has also been adapted in the following countries: Canada, China, England, Hong Kong, Scotland, Singapore, Sweden, Wales.

We have received interest from the Netherlands and Portugal, so they may be the next countries to adapt and roll out the MHFA Program.

Once a year, a MHFA International Newsletter is compiled with contributions from the MHFA Programs around the world. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition is due in August this year. Past editions available here: [www.mhfa.com.au/cms/newsletters-2](http://www.mhfa.com.au/cms/newsletters-2)

We are now in the process of setting up an MHFA International entity which will hold the MHFA Guidelines and further advance the MHFA Program around the world.

## MHFA 'LIKES' SOCIAL MEDIA

In June this year, MHFA Australia joined Facebook and Twitter! We currently have over 230 friends on Facebook and over 220 followers on Twitter!

We will also be launching a MHFA blog in the 2nd half of 2011. This blog will include latest MHFA related news, but will not replace this newsletter. More information soon!

Help us reach 500 fans before the end of 2011!



'LIKE' us on Facebook:  
[www.facebook.com/mentalhealthfirstaid](http://www.facebook.com/mentalhealthfirstaid)



'FOLLOW' us on Twitter:  
[www.twitter.com/mhfa\\_australia](http://www.twitter.com/mhfa_australia)

## Live4Life Project & Youth MHFA [www.live4life.org.au](http://www.live4life.org.au)

By Charmaine Vanderbeek, YMHFA Instructor

An ambitious MHFA-related initiative is underway in the Macedon Ranges (rural Victoria). As part of the Live4Life Project, a unique mental health promotion concept aiming to engage young people, teachers and families, Youth MHFA courses are being delivered to Macedon Ranges community members.

The need for a project such as Live4Life was indicated by increases in depression, anxiety, cyberbullying and non-suicidal self-injury in this community's young people, as reported by schools, police and community health centres.

In February 2010, Macedon Ranges Shire Council provided funding for three local professionals to be trained as Youth MHFA Instructors (Sarah Hardy, Gavan Thomson, Charmaine Vanderbeek). Since March last 2010, more than 150 people have undertaken a Youth MHFA course, offered for free to teaching and non-teaching staff at schools in the community.

Every Live4Life school now has a small team of YMHFAiders who are able to respond appropriately to the needs of students. Teachers in these schools have been using MHFA skills to assist students with mental health issues, with positive results. For instance, following the unexpected and accidental death of a student at one of the schools, staff members indicated that the training helped them to assist students in the grieving process, "I think the training helped us to cope with the feelings of the kids and gave us more background to understand them".

This year, the aim is to conduct YMHFA courses for parents. According to Live4Life project coordinator Sarah Hardy, the response from parents has been overwhelming. "Initially we thought we'd trial one course to see how many parents would be interested. That course booked out in a matter of days, and now we are just about to schedule our fourth course for parents. There is clearly a desire for parents to know more about mental illness and to learn how to help their adolescents."

To evaluate this initiative, pre and post surveys of parents who attended training have been conducted to explore whether MHFA skill level and knowledge increased after the course. The next phase of this evaluation will involve following up people who did the course last year, to find out how and when their MHFA skills have been used.

For more information, please contact Charmaine Vanderbeek: [cvanderbeek@mrsc.vic.gov](mailto:cvanderbeek@mrsc.vic.gov)

## Mental Health Literacy projects

Three helpful websites from the Mental Health Literacy Research Team, Centre for Youth Mental Health, The University of Melbourne.

### www.parentingstrategies.net



Parents concerned about protecting their adolescent from alcohol-related problems

can now receive personalised support from the new interactive parenting program on the website. It provides practical parenting tips and troubleshoots common challenges using realistic scenarios, adolescent testimonials and interactive exercises. This engaging program is tailored to individual parents' needs, and gives parents the opportunity to complete it at a time and place that fits into their busy lifestyles.

Initial evaluation of the program has shown that parents found it

useful, relevant, informative and easy to use. Within two months of completing the program, parents said that they had made significant changes in their modelling of alcohol behaviours and attitudes, their relationship with their child, handling alcohol misuse and adolescent parties, and their knowledge about adolescent alcohol use.

We are seeking to promote the website by placing brief blurbs in school newsletters. If you have any school-aged children (primary or high school) and are happy to assist us with the promotion of this website, or you would like more information, please contact: [enquiries@parentingstrategies.net](mailto:enquiries@parentingstrategies.net)

### whatworks4u.org



The whatworks4u.org website allows young people to share what treatments have worked for their mental health problems and learn what treatments have worked for others. We hope to increase awareness of treatment options and inform treatment decisions based on what has worked for similar young people.

As you may well know, some psychological and pharmacological treatments that have been found to be effective for adults have not proved to be

as effective for adolescents, and some do not work at all. Further investigation into what treatments work for young people is required in order for the most appropriate treatments to be sought. This 'consumer report' website is an ethical way to collect information about treatment effectiveness, as well as allowing the information of what has worked for consumers to be fed back to other consumers, carers and health professionals.

### bipolarcaregivers.org

This is an information website for family and friends of people with bipolar disorder. If you are a family member or close friend (age 18 years or over) of a person with bipolar disorder, we need your help to make sure this website is actually useful.

**Your opinion matters!** For more information and to complete the brief survey, go to the website ([www.bipolarcaregivers.org](http://www.bipolarcaregivers.org)) or contact Lesley Berk: [lberk@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lberk@unimelb.edu.au)

## \*NEW\* MHFA KeepCup available

The MHFA Program has gone environmentally friendly and launched a MHFA branded KeepCup, available through the online MHFA Shop: [www.mhfa.com.au/php/public\\_shop\\_list.php](http://www.mhfa.com.au/php/public_shop_list.php)

KeepCups are a stylish and practical lidded commuter cup that replicate standard takeaway sizes and fit under the group heads of espresso machines. Ours is medium sized, perfect for medium to large sized take-away coffees. We love them and we think our friends (you) will too!



## Free Edition 1 MHFA Manuals!

Edition 2 MHFA Manuals were published in 2010. Free copies of our Edition 1 Adult and Youth MHFA Manuals are available through the MHFA Shop ([www.mhfa.com.au/php/public\\_shop\\_list.php](http://www.mhfa.com.au/php/public_shop_list.php)) - all you need to pay is the postage, or you can choose to pick your order up from Parkville (in Melbourne, VIC).

Whilst various statistics in these Edition 1 Manuals have been superseded, the content is still

valuable! Feel free to order as many as you like.



## 1st dog to complete MHFA

MHFA Instructor Jo Piggott shared this adorable picture from a MHFA course conducted in Belmont NSW. Pictured below are Neville Baxter and his doggie Smokey Baxter (who even got his own certificate!)



## New Report on Youth Suicide

A parliamentary report on youth suicide was released on 4 July 2011.

There are a number of recommendations of relevance to MHFA, for instance, that teachers should receive mandatory training on mental health awareness, including specific training to develop their capacity to recognise and assess suicidal risk

See particularly recommendations 8-10. Report available here:

[www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/youthsuicide/report.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/youthsuicide/report.htm)



## Happy 10th Birthday MHFA!

This year marks 10 years of the MHFA Program, which was developed in 2001 by Betty Kitchener and Professor Tony Jorm with the aim to improve the mental health literacy of members of the Australian community. We will be celebrating this occasion at the Annual MHFA Instructors Conference in August 2011 (see item below for more information).



### Mental Health First Aid ACTION PLAN



**A**pproach, assess and assist with any crisis  
**L**isten non-judgmentally  
**G**ive support and information  
**E**ncourage appropriate professional help  
**E**ncourage other supports

VISIT [www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au) FOR INFORMATION ON COURSES



Algee koala (the MHFA mascot) birthday cakes!

## MHFA Instructors Conference

The 6th Annual MHFA Instructor Conference is on Monday 29th and Tuesday 30th August 2011, in Melbourne. This year we are extending registration to Friends of the MHFA Program.

If you are interested in registering for this conference, please email : [mhfa@mhfa.com.au](mailto:mhfa@mhfa.com.au) Registration is \$250 - which includes full catering for the 2-days, and a show-bag with MHFA related goodies (including the new MHFA KeepCup!)