

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 6AM 11 July 2005**

## **ANU's MoodGYM wins national innovation award**

MoodGYM, an Australian National University online program designed to prevent and treat depression, has won the *Health Outcomes* category of the 2005 AHA Baxter Healthcare National Innovation Awards.

The award was presented today in Adelaide at the *3rd Australasian Conference on Safety and Quality in Health Care*, hosted by the Australian Healthcare Association and The Australasian Association for Quality in Health Care (AAQHC). The AHA is the peak national body for public hospitals and other not-for-profit health and aged care services.

"Depression is a serious chronic illness that affects people of all ages and backgrounds and causes a significant health, social and economic burden on the community," Ms Prue Power, AHA Executive Director, said today.

"Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is a proven successful treatment for the symptoms of depression, but it can be expensive and difficult to access, particularly for people in rural areas. Also, many people with the symptoms of depression are reluctant to seek help from a therapist.

"MoodGYM makes CBT available via the Internet, to people who are unable or unwilling to access traditional CBT therapy.

"MoodGYM is free, interactive and has been proven to prevent and decrease depressive symptoms in users by teaching them the principles of CBT. It teaches users to identify "warped" feelings and provides strategies to handle stress, separation and relationship break-ups as well as relaxation and meditation techniques.

"MoodGYM was created and is maintained by the e-mental Health Research Group at the ANU Centre of Mental Health Research. The popularity of MoodGYM is demonstrated by the more than 10 000 new visitors to the website each month.

"MoodGYM also includes a research database enabling researchers to conduct rigorous scientific trials, using anonymous data about users. In this way, MoodGYM is proving to be a valuable tool for progressing mental health research.

"MoodGYM is the first evidence-based, interactive CBT program to be released free of charge to the general public. It is an innovative use of internet technology to deliver effective depression treatment in a highly accessible format.

"MoodGYM has set a world-standard in e-mental health delivery and research and is an achievement of which the ANU Centre for Mental Health Research can be justly proud," Ms Power said.

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