

**PROJECT TITLE:** Primary Care Management of Comorbid Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Problems

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The co-occurrence or 'comorbidity' of drug and alcohol and mental health problems is common, results in significant disability and is under-recognised and under-treated in Australia. The recent meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) identified the need for all Australian Governments to increase investment in the care of people with comorbid mental health and drug and alcohol problems.

Both the National Mental Health Plan and the National Drug Strategic Framework specifically emphasise the importance of increasing the involvement of primary care providers in the detection and management of comorbid problems. However, the detection by primary care providers of these comorbid disorders is reported as low. An effective healthcare response needs to be informed by a systematic consideration of what constitutes best practice for comorbid mental and substance disorders and how best this can be applied in the primary healthcare setting to improve detection and treatment rates and healthcare outcomes.

This project aims to review the ways in which comorbid drug and alcohol disorders and the high prevalence disorders of anxiety and/or depression can best be managed in the Australian primary healthcare setting. The results of this work will add to the body of knowledge developed through our initial study (Study 1) which investigates which primary care models are most effective in the management of the high prevalence disorders of anxiety and depression.

Specific aims of this second study are to:

- a) identify in the national and international literature current models of primary healthcare for comorbid mental health and drug and alcohol problems and systematically review these models;
- b) identify which models are most likely to provide useful outcomes in a range of Australian primary healthcare settings;
- c) identify the procedures and incentives that are required to bring about more effective management of comorbid mental health and drug and alcohol disorders in Australian primary healthcare settings;
- d) determine the relevance of chronic disease and self-care strategies, including Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), in the management of comorbid mental health and drug and alcohol problems; and
- e) propose a policy and implementation framework for comorbidity in the Australian primary healthcare setting.