

National Stroke Week – 10 to 16 September

12 September 2012 - Up to two-thirds of people who have a stroke become depressed

This week is National Stroke Week (10-16 September) - a good time to reflect on the link between depression and anxiety for people who have experienced a stroke. Up to two-thirds of people who have a stroke will experience depression and although it is more common in the first year after the stroke - stroke survivors, friends and family need to be aware of the symptoms of depression so treatment is accessed at an early stage. Stroke survivors need significant support before they can return to their daily lives – and research shows that many are at increased risk of developing depression. CEO of beyondblue Ms Kate Carnell AO said that managing a chronic illness, like stroke, places many demands and pressures on people with the illness and their carers - and can leave people feeling particularly anxious. "It can be tough managing treatments and symptoms, and this can get people down...and we know that ongoing stress and worry can lead to people developing depression and anxiety disorders," she said. "Depression can often go unrecognised and undiagnosed in people who have had a stroke because the two disorders have many symptoms in common such as problems with memory, difficulty controlling emotions, mood and tiredness. "Stroke often occurs in older people and depression can be dismissed as being part of the ageing process, but this is not true and there are treatments that work." beyondblue has produced specific resources for people who have had a stroke and their carers. There is a FREE DVD and factsheet available. The Tackling depression after stroke DVD, developed with the National Stroke Foundation, features interviews with stroke survivors, their families and their carers, and a psychiatrist who all speak candidly about how depression commonly affects stroke survivors and their carers. The DVD provides helpful insights for people who have experienced stroke and is useful to GPs, counsellors and other health professionals. It also features an interview with a psychiatrist who talks about the signs of depression after stroke and effective treatments. Ms Carnell said: "If people who've had a stroke have no interest in their usual activities and are getting little enjoyment out of life, they should talk to their doctor or health professional about the possibility of depression and anxiety." It's important that carers of people who have had a stroke look after themselves too, as they are also at increased risk of developing mental health problems. Don't feel your problems aren't important. If things are getting you down, talk to your doctor," she said. To order the FREE DVD, fact sheet on stroke and depression, or information to support carers, go to www.beyondblue.org.au or call the beyondblue info line 1300 22 4636. To interview Kate Carnell, contact: beyondblue (03) 9810 6100 Claire Quinn / 0438 680 019 or Julie Foster / 0409 433 501 beyondblue: the national depression and anxiety initiative – www.beyondblue.org.au or 1300 22 4636

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