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MEDIA STATEMENT

Mental Health Nurses should be part of the recommendations made by the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses (ACMHN) is keen to work collaboratively with the government and other professional bodies following recent recommendations made by the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review's mental health reference group.

The mental health reference group recommended to increase access to "preventative" psychological therapy sessions which has been reported to increase mental health expenditure further by \$2 billion.

While some groups welcome the proposal, Professor Ian Hickey from Sydney University's Brain and Mind Centre said that focusing on preventative care will fail to address the more serious problem of poor outcomes for people with significant mental disorders.

The ACMHN CEO, Adjunct Associate Professor Kim Ryan said that mental health nurses should be central to this discussion.

"Providing access to quality mental health care and delivering positive outcomes will continue to be a challenge unless we start to address how mental health nurses can be part of the solution", said Ms Ryan.

Ms Ryan said that in order to provide better mental health services we first need to develop and sustain a nursing workforce to respond to the mental health needs of Australians, across the spectrum of their health and all clinical settings.

If we improve the mental health knowledge and clinical skill of all nurses and midwives, we will be prepared to address the MBS Review's mental health reference group's recommendation to increase 'preventative' mental health care and support.

"There are 370,000 nurses and midwives in Australia combined, with great geographic spread - working and living within our communities but often we are left out changes in the implementation of health care policies and reforms."

Nurses and midwives should be enabled to practice to the full extent of their professional training and registration.

The work of nurses and midwives go beyond caring for patients; within their specialty, nurses and midwives can prescribe medications, educating patients on medical conditions and advising patients on how to safely self-administer medication and disease management.

Better recognition and utilisation of the nursing and midwifery workforces by the government will be a step in the right direction to address both preventative care and also better mental health outcomes.

END

Available for interview or comment ACMHN CEO Adjunct Associate Professor Kim Ryan

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