



PICTURED:
Dr Claire
Kelly and
Melissa
Hoyer.

Kicking off Mental Health Month

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AUSTRALIAN Rotary Health’s favourite time of year is October, Mental Health Month, because that’s when we see Rotarians and the wider public go all out to help “Lift the Lid on Mental Illness” and raise money for mental health research.

On October 1, we kicked off Mental Health Month with a Hat Day media launch brunch in Sydney, NSW. This was an opportunity to show the media how important it is to support research that informs our knowledge about mental health.

One of our special guests that morning was Dr Claire Kelly, one of the researchers behind the teen Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) program, which Australian Rotary Health funded a trial of in 2014-16. In a Q&A with media personality Melissa Hoyer, Claire said kids are very unlikely to admit they are not okay.

"That is actually one of the reasons why mental health first aid is so important, because there have been various projects over the past, say, 20-25 years to encourage people to seek help for themselves, but they don't work particularly well," Claire said.

"You have to know enough about the problem to be able to recognise it in anyone let alone yourself; you have to acknowledge that, 'Oh, this is potentially something that's actually happening to me'. You have to see the benefits of seeking help as outweighing the drawbacks – which there is a great deal of stigma, internalised stigma, around and a real fear that if you seek help you will be judged.

"So what actually ends up happening, and this is not just across

mental health, but anywhere there is stigma, is that people are more likely to get help when someone they believe cares about them – that they believe is somewhat knowledgeable, at the very least – has actually approached them to say, 'Hey, I'm really concerned about you'."

Claire specifies that rather than focusing on what we say when a child says they are not okay, we need to actually ask them.

"Now, obviously, mental health first aid can't teach someone to diagnose a mental health problem, but you can recognise when someone you care about is not doing well and thinking about major changes in thinking and feeling behaviour that's really interfering with functioning.

"That could be about not spending time with friends and family, it could be about not doing so well at school, and it could be about just sleeping to literally get through as much time as possible. And it doesn't go away quickly.

"A couple of weeks is probably enough to start saying, 'Let's find out what might be going on here'."

The program has now reached tens of thousands of school students across Australia, and has gained the stamp of approval from international star Lady Gaga, who is rolling it out in schools across the US (see page 14).

For more information on teen MHFA, visit mhfa.com.au/courses/public/types/teen

teen MHFA: results from a cluster-randomised crossover evaluation study¹



1. Hart LM, Morgan AJ, Rossetto A, Kelly CM, Mackinnon A, Jorm AE. Helping adolescents to better support their peers with a mental health problem: A cluster-randomised crossover trial of teen Mental Health First Aid Australia & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 2018.

Cool Kids program recognised in NSW parliament

IN September, Macquarie University's Cool Kids program, which has received research funding from Australian Rotary Health over many years, was featured at the NSW Universities' Research Impact Showcase at NSW Parliament House.

Cool Kids, in its many variations, has improved the mental health of tens of thousands of children across the world, with its first ever anxiety program delivered via telephone, then CD-ROM and, since 2016, it has been made available online.

Children who go through the



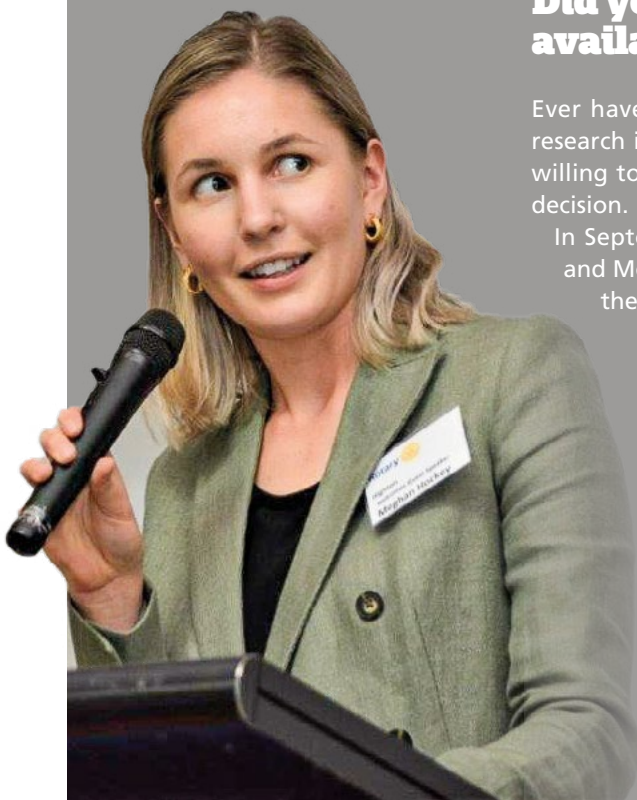
PICTURED: The Cool Kids team: Dr Lauren McLellan, left, Professor Viviana Wuthrich, Professor Ron Rapee, Professor Jennie Hudson and Dr Ann Wignall.

program show improved quality of life, with reduced rates of anxiety and depression that are sustained.

Without funding that has evaluated the program's effectiveness, Cool Kids might not be where it is today. This is one example of how your donation

can make a difference.

Intern psychologists from universities in Australia now learn about the Cool Kids program as part of their training, and around 1500 Australian clinicians and schoolteachers have completed training in the Cool Kids suite.



Did you know our researchers may be available to speak at your Rotary club?

Ever have trouble convincing your Rotary club that donating to health research is a worthy cause? We have a range of researchers available and willing to share their research with your club, which may help sway their decision. It is also great to see exactly where your donation is going.

In September, Australian Rotary Health PhD Scholars Bianca Kavanagh and Meghan Hockey (pictured) were invited to present their research to the Rotary Club of Highton in Geelong, Vic.

Bianca's research investigates whether and how personality disorder moderates clinical and epidemiological outcomes in psychiatric disorders; while Meghan's research is looking at the association between dairy consumption and mood and cognition. These two ladies were very well received.

If you would like to organise a PhD Scholarship recipient to speak at your club, contact Cheryl Deguara via cheryl@arh.org.au or 02 8837 1900.

Mental Health Research Grant recipients and Postdoctoral Fellowship recipients are also available. Contact Jessica Cooper via jessica@arh.org.au or 02 8837 1900 for more information.

**Please note, there is no guarantee that researchers will be available to attend all Rotary club locations. Speak to us to find out more.*



Hats off to Hat Day

During the month of October, we encouraged everyone to get involved in Hat Day. Here is what some of you got up to to show your support.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Many clubs, including the Rotary Club of Broadmeadows, set up Lift the Lid awareness tables and collection tins at their local Bunnings Warehouse store; The Rotary Club of Brisbane Mid-City, Qld, hosted a Lift the Lid Ball to raise money and awareness for mental health; The Rotary Club of Mooloolaba, Qld, hosted its annual Walk for Mental Health to support Australian Rotary Health; The Rotary Club of Sandy Bay, Tas, took its bright Lift the Lid posters and collection tins to the streets.

