

Poll shows mental health education is failing youth

The majority of Australians believe there is not enough mental health education available to young people.

The Health and Medical Research Public Opinion Poll 2009 published by Research Australia found 75 per cent of Australians believe there is not enough education and information for young people about mental health issues.

Research Australia CEO Rebecca James said the poll was conducted annually to provide a community voice on current health issues.

The poll found the single most important reason to teach young people about mental health issues is to help them recognise symptoms and learn what help, assistance and resources are available.

The poll also revealed Australians believe smoking, drugs and alcohol are the most significant health issues effecting young people. However it was accorded a lower priority for research into preventative health where preference is given to cancer, cardio vascular disease and diabetes.

The poll showed that 29 per cent of people agreed smoking, alcohol and drugs to be the most important health issues facing Australian youth, believing the government should be doing something about it.

"Mental health education is of vital importance, especially to young people who face increasing peer group pressure and the changes associated with growing up. We need to equip our youth with appropriate skills and show them the resources available to help deal with these issues," Ms James said.

Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Mental Health Council of Australia, Sebastian Rosenberg, said: "Seventy-five per cent of all mental illness happens before the age of 25. It is vital we provide effective mental health services and education to young people so they can finish studying, training, get and keep jobs and become full citizens in our community. This poll shows the community understands how far we have to go".

The public opinion poll looked at a range of health and medical research issues facing Australia today. The poll also revealed:

- 28% of people have 'avoided or delayed visits to a GP, dentist or specialist doctor, in response to increasing financial pressure in the past six months.
- 91% of people believe improving hospitals and the health care system is the most important priority for the Federal Government over the next 2-3 years.
- 55% of people believe access to medicines through the PBS could be improved.
- 43% of people agreed more funding is needed for cancer research. The poll highlighted this as the most important health and medical problem facing Australia today.
- 64% of respondents support a tax on junk food in an attempt to reduce excessive consumption and avoid the damaging health effects.
- There is little concern about the risk of infectious diseases such as swine flu.

Research Australia's 2009 Public Opinion Poll was conducted by Crosby Textor using qualitative and quantitative methodologies during May, June and July 2009. The quantitative study investigated the views of 806 Australians aged 18 and over, giving a margin of error of 3.5 percent.

MEDIA: To arrange an interview or a photograph, please contact:

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About Research Australia

Research Australia is the peak not for profit body for health and medical research. It is a national alliance of over 180 member and supporting organisations working together to promote health and medical research in Australia.

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