

LifeSpan

Investigating the Mental Health of people
with Intellectual Disability across the LifeSpan

Welcome to the very first issue of the
LifeSpan Project Newsletter.

The LifeSpan Project is a South Australian based research project studying the mental health of adults with an intellectual disability.

The Project aims to:

- Provide vital information regarding the mental health status of those adults with an intellectual disability.
- Provide information about the prevalence and nature of mental illness.
- Consider the mental health problems and needs amongst specific groups such as indigenous Australians and older people with an intellectual disability.
- Investigate mental health problems in late adolescents with an intellectual disability in their transition from school life into adult services.

This project will result in a number of benefits for carers and/or service providers. These include:

- Improved assessment, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness for adults with intellectual disability.
- Increased understanding of the prevalence, nature and development of mental illness in adults with an intellectual disability, including risk and protective factors.
- Increased knowledge to assist in policy development, resource allocation and service planning for adults with an intellectual disability and mental illness.
- Improved resources and increased access to training for carers/staff working with adults with an intellectual disability and mental illness.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ◆ Welcome
- ◆ Background History
- ◆ Launch Headline
- ◆ Team Profile
- ◆ Info Box/Upcoming Events
- ◆ Contact details

The LifeSpan Project newsletter will be a quarterly publication with updates about the progress of our research, useful information relevant to research participants, information about our team members and their extensive experience in the fields of intellectual disability and mental health upcoming events.



Background to the LifeSpan Project

Industry Partners

The LifeSpan Project is a collaborative research project between The Centre of Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology - Monash University, IDSC, Minda Inc and DECS.

Industry Partner meetings are held quarterly and following people attend:

Prof Bruce Tonge
Prof Stewart Einfeld
Dr Caroline Mohr
Centre of Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology - Monash University

Richard Bruggemann - IDSC
Janice Clark - IDSC
Phil Martin - Minda Inc
Dorothy O'Brien - Minda Inc
Deb Kay - DECS
Ann Rymill - IDSC

◆ Prevalence

Mental illness is 2-3 times more prevalent in people with an intellectual disability than in the general community. Problems related to mental illness often cause distress to the individual and their family/carers, exacerbate their disability and add to the costs of caring, as well as disrupting the individual's developmental, educational and occupational progress. Unfortunately, mental illness in this population often goes undetected and therefore untreated. One of the greatest obstacles is that instruments used to assess and assist in diagnosis of mental illness in the general community are not suitable for use with individuals with an intellectual disability.

◆ ACAD

The Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology - Monash University, have conducted an internationally unique longitudinal study (Australian Child to Adult Development Study; ACAD) investigating behavioural and emotional disturbances in a large representative sample of children, adolescents and adults with intellectual disability. The LifeSpan Project has emerged from the work conducted on the ACAD project that has led to the development and use of the Developmental Behaviour Checklist (DBC).

◆ DBC

Using the Developmental Behaviour Checklist - Adults (DBC-A) the LifeSpan Project team will assess emotional and behavioural disturbances in adults who have an intellectual disability. The results will contribute to the largest and most comprehensive research in this area, both on a national and international level.



OFFICIAL LAUNCH



On Tuesday 7th February 2006, the Minister, the Hon Jay Weatherill, launched the Lifespan Project, a collaborative research project between Monash University's Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology, IDSC, Minda and the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS).

The launch was well attended by many people who work in the field of Intellectual Disability, and included opening speeches from the Minister, Professor Bruce Tonge (Monash University), Richard Bruggemann (CEO-IDSC), Phil Martin (CEO-Minda Inc) and Deb Kay (Manager Interagency Health Care - DECS).

Special thanks must go to IDSC for the In-kind contribution of organising and catering for the event, and to DECS for the In-Kind contribution of the venue (Raggat House, Australian Education Union).



L to R: Phil Flint, Caroline Mohr, Bruce Tonge, Barbara Pennington, Sharon Stinson, Rafaela Karas. Insert Ann Rymill

"The outcomes of the project will be very important to people with intellectual disability. They will provide evidence on which to base future interventions, and will enable us to look at not only the prevalence of mental illness amongst people with intellectual disability, but also special programs that might be needed to meet needs, particularly when traditional treatment programs require a degree of cognitive ability." *Richard Bruggemann LifeSpan Launch*

Check out our Webpage - www.med.monash.edu/spppm/research/devpsych/lifespan.html and find out more about the project. It will be updated regularly as the research progresses.

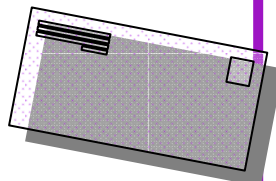
Information and Upcoming Events

IDSC Conference - The LifeSpan Team will be at the IDSC conference on May 30th, Lakes Resort Hotel-look out for our display. Professor Bruce Tonge is an invited keynote speaker and will provide information on the LifeSpan Project at 1.45pm-2.45pm.

Information Packs - containing information about the Project and details about your involvement with the research can be obtained from the address below and will be available at the conference.

Contact Details

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Research Team

CHIEF INVESTIGATORS

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- ❖ Professor Stewart Einfeld
- ❖ Dr Caroline Mohr

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RESEARCH TEAM

Project Manager

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The LifeSpan Project is a Monash University Centre for Developmental Psychiatry and Psychology Research Project. It is funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) and APEX Foundation for Research into Intellectual Disability.

This project is consistent with the Federal Government's National Research priorities and the Third National Mental Health Policy.