

Antidepressant debate highlights the importance of complementary strategies to tackle depression

28/02/2008 10:00:00 AM

The recent debate about the effectiveness of antidepressants provides a timely reminder of the wide variety of self-help options people can use to help prevent and manage depression.

Judi Clements, Chief Executive of the Mental Health Foundation says "Proven ways people can help themselves include moderate physical activity, healthy eating, limiting alcohol intake, getting enough sleep, taking time out to do the things they enjoy, talking with friends and loved ones, and talking therapies. These options are often the first port of call, especially for people with mild to moderate depression."

The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand and Sport & Recreation New Zealand (SPARC) work together to raise the profile of physical activity in helping people with depression.

Judi Clements says "Moderate physical activity doesn't necessarily mean running a marathon, it can be something as simple as going for a walk or doing the gardening. Aerobic activity such as running, cycling, brisk walking, strength and resistance training are all beneficial for depression."

There is also support for those wishing to take up or increase physical activity and SPARC work with GPs nationwide to promote the Green Prescription initiative. A Green Prescription is written advice from a GP to a patient to be more active.

Support can be provided to a Green Prescription patient over the phone or in a face-to-face session for free. Or for a small charge, the patient can join a community based group programme. In some regions patients can also access subsidised gym and pool memberships.

In addition, the Mental Health Foundation has long advocated for talking therapies to be subsidised, as antidepressants are, and for talking therapies services to be more widely promoted and available.

Judi Clements says "Cost and access are significant barriers to people seeking talking therapies especially those in the low to middle income bracket with sessions costing between \$60-120. People experiencing depression will often need multiple sessions to work through their issues and talking therapies services are not consistently available throughout the country with rural areas being particularly lacking in services."

For people who may be experiencing depression, it is important to seek help – and the earlier the better. For more information about depression visit –www.mentalhealth.org.nz, www.depression.org.nz or phone the depression support line on 0800 111 757.

For further information about the Green Prescription initiative visit –
<http://www.sparc.org.nz/getting-active/green-prescription/overview>

ENDS

Media enquiries to –

Paula Taylor

Communications & Marketing Manager

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand

09 300 7025 or 021 300 594

"kii mai koe ki ahau he aha te mea nui o te ao? maaku e kii atu ki a koe - he tangata he tangata he tangata"
"if you aske