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Mental health is important for everyone

Mental health is more than just treating mental illnesses; it is about our mental wellbeing which is so important for our health and life outcomes, according to Menzies School of Health Research.

“Feeling strong and being able to contribute to your community are important aspects of good mental health,” Associate Professor Tricia Nagel said.

For the past 6 years, Menzies School of Health Research has been looking for ways to improve mental health. It is also looking at prevention by examining the tools a person or community needs to stay socially, spiritually, emotionally and mentally strong.

“Many Indigenous people live their lives suffering from mental health problems. Indigenous people are at a higher risk of developing a mental disorder than other Australians.

Research has shown that Indigenous people are more likely to go to hospital for help with mental disorders linked with alcohol, petrol and marijuana use. Indigenous people die from mental disorders linked with substance misuse at more than 11 times the rate of non-Indigenous people.

“At Menzies we tackle these challenges by empowering Indigenous people to make them strong in mind and body.

“We are striving to communicate ‘two-way’ mental health messages and to discover ways to overcome barriers caused by language and literacy.

Menzies’ researchers give people the tools to recognise and overcome the problems causing mental illness, such as social, work and family stress.

Menzies has created assessment and treatment tools and educational resources that provide an Indigenous perspective on mental illness as part of the Australian Integrated Mental Health Initiative (AIMhi).

“The resources help people with mental illness to identify the cause and seek the right treatment for the problem.”

Menzies’ researchers have developed resources explaining the impact petrol sniffing, grog and ganja have on the brain. These are available from the Menzies School of Health Research website – www.menzies.edu.au/AIMHI.

World Mental Health Day is being celebrated on Sunday 8 October.

As part of its 25th Anniversary, Menzies School of Health Research is raising money to develop a new Youth Health Research Program, which will focus on issues such as mental health, sexual health and substance misuse.