

Media Release

RACP links chronic physical health problems and poor mental health in young people

13 October 2016

A troubling link has been highlighted between chronic physical illnesses, like asthma or diabetes, and an increased risk of developing mental health problems in children and young people in a statement issued today by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP).

In light of this, this mental health week, the RACP is calling on the health sector to come together and develop more efficient, integrated and responsive models of care for children and young people with developmental, behavioural or mental health problems.

The RACP Paediatrics & Child Health Division President Dr Sarah Dalton said she has grave concerns that only a minority of children and young people are getting the care they need.

“The most common mental health condition we see as paediatricians in Australia are young patients presenting with ADHD. Some studies have suggested that as much as 30 per cent of our work comes from this alone.

“With an increasing number of children and young people showing signs of mental health problems, and a limited number of clinicians specifically-trained to help them, we’re worried that young people could be falling through the cracks.

“We see firsthand that mental health issues can emerge in part due to an underlying chronic physical illness and that early contact with health professionals can make a huge difference.

“If left unaddressed poor mental health can have devastating flow on effects including suicide, trouble functioning at home or in school, and difficulty forming friendships which can lead to a range of serious health complications later in life,” said Dr Dalton.

To tackle this serious issue the RACP is calling on the health sector to come together and develop more efficient, integrated and responsive models of care for children and young people with developmental, behavioural or mental health problems.

Crucial to this process is recognising the pivotal role paediatrician’s play in delivering clinical care to children and young people with mental health problems.

“We want to engage more with our professional colleagues in other disciplines as well as community organisations, state and federal governments and most importantly individuals and families of those who have been or are being affected by mental health issues, so that we can get the best outcome for our patients,” said Dr Dalton.

To read the statement in full click [here](#).

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.