

## CASE STUDY: Words for Wellbeing Ipswich Hospital

Refers to: NSQHS Standard 2 Partnering with Consumers

Keywords: Bibliotherapy, Consumer Health Information

### Introduction

*Words for Wellbeing* is a self help mental health and physical health literacy project initiated by Ipswich Hospital, (part of West Moreton Hospital and Health Service - WMHHS), in southeast Queensland. It is a collaborative project between the health service clinicians, the City of Ipswich (Ipswich Libraries), and the other local government authorities in the West Moreton Health Service catchment area: Somerset Regional Council (Somerset Libraries), Lockyer Valley Regional Council (Lockyer Valley Libraries), and Scenic Rim Regional Council (Scenic Rim Libraries). The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) joined as a partner to help with evaluation of the project.

The *Words for Wellbeing* project provides people across the region with useful, evidence-based library resources to improve their mental and physical health. Reliance on health information obtained on the internet by patients can be a concern for health professionals and the idea of steering the community to view public libraries as a source for credible, curated health content was a possible solution. Listed resources have been recommended by health professionals and organisations directly involved in healthcare.

### Background

In 2003 a program called *Books on Prescription* was developed in Cardiff by clinical psychologist Professor Neil Frude. He compiled a recommended reading list of mental health books and piloted a partnership with Cardiff Libraries. According to Frude: "The doctors are already there, the books are already there and so are the libraries. It just needed joining them up" (Brown, 2013). A national scheme for England, *Reading Well - Books on Prescription*, based on Frude's program was launched in England in 2013. Delivered by the Reading Agency, it focuses on readings about mental health and dementia.

### Australian context

An Australian version of *Books on Prescription* was launched in Western Australia at Broome, Derby and Kununurra in 2011. This was collaboration between Boab Health Services and the Kimberley Public Libraries. A similar *Books on Prescription* initiative was launched at a number of public

libraries across central and far western NSW in May 2016, in partnership with the Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health.

In early 2016, the hospital librarian and the Consumer Engagement Officer at Ipswich Hospital heard about the UK *Books on Prescription* program. They decided to modify the program for the West Moreton environment and implement it - under the name *Words for Wellbeing* - across WMHHS in partnership with their local libraries.

Whilst the Books on Prescription model focuses on mental health, *Words for Wellbeing* caters to both mental and physical health. The Ipswich collaborative developed two lists: one regarding mental health and one for physical health conditions.

### **How the program operates for the consumer**

Step 1- A health professional recommends a book by ticking the appropriate books on a *Words for Wellbeing* prescription flyer and provides it to the patient, talking to them briefly about reading to improve their health condition knowledge.

Step 2 - The patient visits their local public library (in this case one of the four local government area libraries) and borrows the book. If it is not available the librarians can reserve it for the person. The recommended books in the library can be easily identified on the shelf as all have a *Words for Wellbeing* sticker.

Step 3 - The patient reads the book, thinks about what they could do to improve their health based on health professional advice and further information gained via reading the book. The patient then takes action and makes behaviour changes with the support of their health professional.

A list of resources is also available on the central *Words for Wellbeing* website hosted by Ipswich Libraries. Here the public can view a list of evidence based, health professional approved resources on physical or mental health and choose titles of interest:

<http://www.library.ipswich.qld.gov.au/words-for-wellbeing/>

### **Library staff involvement**

*West Moreton Hospital and Health Service (WMHHS)*

The hospital librarian and the Consumer Engagement Officer at Ipswich Hospital worked in conjunction with health professionals to choose a list of evidence based resources to include in the

program. The final approval and selection of the books was undertaken by staff at WMHHS. The process involved:

1. Research into other Books on Prescription project book selections
2. Consultation with health professionals on books they might prefer, and books they might currently recommend
3. Development of criteria by health professionals for book selection:
  - Recent publications
  - Respected author either with clinical qualifications or significant experience in health information writing
  - No inclusions of alternative therapies that have no evidence base
  - Suitable for community readership

Local health professionals then use the recommended reading lists and offer a brochure to patients who may benefit from the further reading. This occurs through General Practitioners who have been engaged through their local Primary Health Network and through other health professionals in the region.

As part of this project librarians from the public libraries were provided training by the librarians from USQ and WMHHS. This training comprised reference interview skills for health which covered barriers to information seeking, information gathering and needs analysis. Particular attention was given to the need for confidentiality and the role of the librarian to provide access to information and not offer any advice on the condition or assist in healthcare decisions.

### *The council libraries*

Local libraries purchase the suggested books, however are not required to purchase all of them (budget and collection dependant). Council libraries collect usage statistics on number of loans of items from the *Words for Wellbeing* reading lists. They also support and promote the program and website.

Ipswich Libraries maintains the website and the other three local government areas direct their patrons to it through their own websites. This ensures the program stays consistent across the WMHHS region and allows more efficient use of public library time. It also shows fantastic support between local public libraries. The website includes links to reputable web resources and highlights appropriate apps which focus on mental and physical health. Ipswich Libraries can also monitor traffic for the website and analyse usage data.

## Discussion

“Bibliotherapy commonly refers to the use of literature to help people deal with psychological, social and emotional problems” (Bibliotherapy Australia, n.d). There is good evidence from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) that self-help books can help people understand and manage common conditions, including depression and anxiety.

There is a wealth of evidence to show that prescribing such books does work. Research published in the journal Plos One in 2013 showed that people who used them over a year had measurably lower levels of depression (Williams, 2013). Although books can sometimes work on their own, research has shown that self-help approaches work best when there is support from a health professional. The *Words for Wellbeing Program* has been well received across WMHSS local government areas. This has inspired Redland Hospital (Metro South Health) located in southeast Brisbane to partner with their local library, resulting in the launch of their own *Words for Wellbeing* program in late 2017. WMHSS has been keen to share its work and has allowed Redland Hospital to reuse and adapt content.

This initiative links into NSQHS Standard 2 (Partnering with Consumers) and shows how bibliotherapy can be used as a health promotion strategy. It is anticipated that patients’ information literacy levels will increase which will then impact positively on their health. Together with USQ, WMHSS are currently evaluating the impact of the program.

## References

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