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Media Statement

AWARENESS OF DIABETES AND MENTAL WELLBEING RAISED

To coincide with World Diabetes Day, one of the state's few psychologists specialising in diabetes care is raising awareness of the link between diabetes and depression and is urging people to seek support if they need it.

Psychologist and diabetes educator, Angela Hislop who will speak at a free public seminar 'Diabetes: Lifting the Weight from the World', said people with diabetes face a set of unique issues that could affect mental health and wellbeing.

"People with diabetes face a combination of problems that require specialised attention – on top of the usual issues like relationships, family conflict and grief that we all need to cope with throughout our lives, people with diabetes are also confronted with some very specific issues, placing them at risk of depression" she said.

"Some of the signs of depression overlap with the symptoms of diabetes, so it's important that someone trained to distinguish these subtleties is available to make sure that people in need of support are identified and treated appropriately."

"Emotional distress or depression has been related to higher blood glucose levels and therefore, increases the risk of developing long term complications from diabetes such as heart and kidney disease, amputation and blindness, so it's really important to access help without delay."

Ms Hislop said some of the signs and symptoms of depression included lack of motivation, lethargy, lack of interest in regular activities, social withdrawal, poor or excessive sleep, frequent crying, aggressive behaviour – for adolescents in particular, and an unusual increase or decrease in appetite.

"Anyone who feels they may be emotionally distressed or can't pinpoint a reason for unstable blood glucose levels should contact their GP for a referral to a psychologist for assessment and treatment, if needed."

Ms Hislop said there was financial support available for people with mental health concerns that some people may not be aware of.

"I encourage anyone who thinks they could benefit from an appointment with a psychologist to check whether they may be eligible for financial help through Medicare or their private health cover – these rebates can really help ease the financial burden," she said.

Ms Hislop will address a free public seminar on World Diabetes Day, Wednesday November 14, which will discuss new research projects and recent discoveries on track to developing improved treatments and possible cures for the disease as well as personal perspectives on diabetes.

Other speakers include the Hon. Judi Moylan MP, Head of the Centre for Diabetes Research Professor Grant Morahan, WAIMR deputy director and endocrinologist Professor Peter Leedman, and Diabetes WA CEO Liz Kerrigan Benson.

The evening seminar 'Diabetes: Lifting the Weight from the World', is a joint initiative between the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research, the Diabetes Research Foundation and Diabetes WA to be held in the WAIMR Seminar room at the QEII Medical Centre in Nedlands.

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