

HER CENTRE AUSTRALIA

HEALTH - EDUCATION - RESEARCH

RESEARCH Leaders in Women's Mental Health

ABOUT HER CENTRE AUSTRALIA

HER Centre Australia is dedicated to understanding and treating mental illnesses experienced by women. Our focus is creating interventions and treatments that are tailored to the unique aspects of mental illness through a woman's lifespan.

We provide clinical services, training and workshops that interconnect with our discovery research to accelerate our vision of transforming the outcomes, functioning and quality of life of all women experiencing mental illness.

MEETING A RESEARCH NEED

HER Centre Australia is part of a movement amongst the international research field to generate evidence for long recognised differences in the way mental illness expresses itself and impacts on women and how that compares to men. Until recently, there was a paucity of research in women's mental health, and most clinical trials only included male participants. However, the last decade has seen an increase in the number of researchers focussed on women's mental health. Indeed, HER Centre Australia Director, Professor Jayashri Kulkarni (AM) is the immediate past president of the International Association for Women's Mental Health, where she helped drive the direction and importance of taking a gender lens in the study of mental illness.

There is still a long way to go however, and only a very small minority of competitive government and philanthropic research grants are currently awarded to researchers in the field of women's mental health. The number of researchers in Australia who focus primarily on women's mental health is also unacceptably low. Hence the imperative for HER Centre Australia, to act as a vehicle and platform to expand and promote both the number of researchers and the amount of research that is conducted in this critical space.

HER Centre Australia - Research

WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH DIVISIONS

Hormones and Mental Illness

Exploring the link between reproductive hormones and mental illness in women

Headed by Professor Kulkarni, research in this division explores the role of the endocrine system, particularly reproductive hormones, and their impact on mental illness. Schizophrenia, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, depression, particularly in the menopause, pregnancy related conditions and many more are all significantly impacted by reproductive hormones. Research into their relationship can not only unlock a more complete understanding of their onset and course, but can point to new treatments.



Professor Jayashri Kulkarni (AM)

PROFESSOR JAYASHRI KULKARNI (AM) - DIRECTOR, HER CENTRE AUSTRALIA

Professor Kulkarni is the Monash University, Department of Psychiatry (CCS) Head of Department, Alfred Health Professor of Psychiatry and Director of HER Centre Australia. Professor Kulkarni's clinical and academic career has been dedicated to research, teaching and clinical care in the area of women's mental health. Her academic track record is internationally recognised and her achievement in helping create awareness of the need to treat women's mental health as a distinct area of psychiatry and neuroscience.

HER CENTRE AUSTRALIA TEAM

The HER Centre Australia team is made up of over 30 psychiatrists, psychiatry registrars, medical officers, research fellows, research nurses, research assistants, study coordinators, lived experience consultants, volunteers, administration staff and students, plus a large number of local and international collaborators who all contribute to the research strategic direction, research conduct, and day-to-day operation of the Centre.

The culture of HER Centre Australia is inclusive, collaborative and supportive so that each team member is respected for their contribution to the clinical, education and research outcomes achieved.

Our research vision is that there will be safe, effective and accessible treatments available for all women with mental illness and that all clinicians will automatically treat mental illness with a gender sensitive lens.



"OUR AIM IS TO CONDUCT WORLD CLASS WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH WITH EQUALITY, RESPECT AND UNDERSTANDING"

Cognition and hormones

Exploring the link between reproductive hormones and cognitive function in women

Cognitive problems, including difficulties with attention, memory, problem solving, and decision making, are a central and problematic feature of many conditions. Cognitive problems are often poorly characterised, poorly understood and poorly treated. The Cognition and Hormones Group at HER Centre Australia are focused on characterising cognition in a range of psychiatric and women's health conditions, with a focus on understanding the link between sex hormones, stress and cognition. These findings can be translated into new treatments to enhance cognition and overall functioning and quality of life.

Eating disorders

Understanding the link between biological, psychological and social factors to discover better treatments for eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa.

Over one million Australians have an eating disorder.

Eating disorders are highly prevalent and have a high morbidity and mortality. The onset and severity of anorexia nervosa and bulimia can be influenced by a number of factors, including a lived experience of trauma.

The existence of effective treatment options for eating disorders is limited. We are implementing a suite of research focussed on understanding the underlying biological causes and changes associated with these disorders so we can translate the findings into innovative and effective treatments.

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)

Using brain stimulation to treat mental illness in women

TMS is a safe and proven effective treatment, most commonly in major depression. We are conducting research in the use of TMS in women with depression during pregnancy or in the post partum phase, when medication based therapies may not be indicated. We also research the use of TMS in women with treatment resistant depression.

Other Areas of Research

In addition to the research pillars above, HER Centre Australia conducts research across all areas of women's mental health, including family violence, reproductive mental health, aging and mental health, addiction, poverty and employment and more.

Our Research Tools

Specialised techniques used in our research include eye-tracking, transcranial magnetic stimulation, cognitive testing, biological/biochemistry assessments, electroencephalography, brain imaging, genetic biobanking.

Website Visit our website for all the latest information about our work, to meet our team, and find out how you can become involved.

Contact Us

HER Centre Australia
Level 4, 607 St Kilda Road
Melbourne, VIC 3004

T: +61 3 9076 8156

E: hercentreaustralia@monash.edu.au

W: www.monash.edu/her-centre