

Improving Mental Health and Well-being of People with Intellectual Disability:

A Research to Action Day for Professionals and Carers

Reviewed by Kim Eisler from the 3dn website <https://3dn.unsw.edu.au>

On 25 July 2017, 3DN launched a series of new must-have practical tools and resources designed to enhance the skills of professionals and carers who support people with an intellectual disability. The Department of Developmental Disability and Neuropsychiatry, also known as 3DN, was set up by the Chair of Intellectual Disability Mental Health to improve mental health policy and practice for people with intellectual or developmental disability (IDD). The following article is drawn from the information available on the 3DN website <https://3dn.unsw.edu.au>.

The new resources were officially launched by the Hon. Tanya Davies, Minister for Mental Health at a *Research to Action Day* which was kindly sponsored by NSW Health, and Ageing, Disability & Home Care, Family and Community Services. The day included presentations by carers, advocates, and health and disability professionals, some of whom were involved in the development of the resources. Workshop activities helped attendees become familiar with the resources and how they could be implemented. The day was well attended by health, mental health and disability professionals, carers and advocates, along with academics and those involved in policy development.

The resources that were launched include:

- The Intellectual Disability Mental Health Core Competency Framework: A Practical Toolkit for Mental Health Professionals
- New e-Learning modules for disability professionals, carers and mental health professionals
- Podcasts on responsible prescribing to people with an intellectual disability for health and mental health professionals
- A new Positive Cardio-metabolic Health for People with Intellectual Disability e-Learning module aimed at health professionals.

The importance of these resources and the need to provide such tools is well recognised by people with an ID and their advocates. Compared to the general population they are 2-3 times more likely to experience

common mental health disorders and are more likely to be exposed to risk factors associated with poor mental health (e.g. poor physical health, trauma, stress). Additionally people with an ID are less likely to access mental health care.

Resource 1: [The Intellectual Disability Mental Health Core Competency Framework: A Practical Toolkit for Mental Health Professionals](#)

The Intellectual Disability Mental Health Core Competency Framework: A Practical Toolkit for Mental Health Professionals has been developed to accompany the previously released Manual. The Toolkit is a guide about *how* mental health professionals in mainstream services can develop the core competencies outlined in the Framework Manual.

It provides practical information, assessment tools and links to resources to assist in the development of the core attributes described in the Framework Manual. The mental health workforce can use the resources to continue to support their professional development in the area of intellectual disability mental health. A section also outlines how service managers can help to implement the Framework and Toolkit in their mainstream mental health services.

Contents

The main section of the Toolkit covers considerations for each stage of the treatment pathway – i) Intake, ii) Engagement, iii) Assessment, iv) Treatment, and v) Transition. It also contains assessment tools that are suitable to use when assessing people with an intellectual disability (e.g. psychopathology, behaviour and

“It provides practical information, assessment tools and links to resources...”

emotion, and support needs); links to resources including training and education opportunities, guides, reports and discussion papers, relevant policy documents, and resources that can be provided to people with an intellectual disability, their family and support networks.

You can also find the launch article of this framework in Volume 7 Issue 2 of our Journal.



Where to find it:

<https://3dn.unsw.edu.au/idmh-core-competency-framework>

Resource 2: New e-Learning modules for disability professionals, carers and mental health professionals

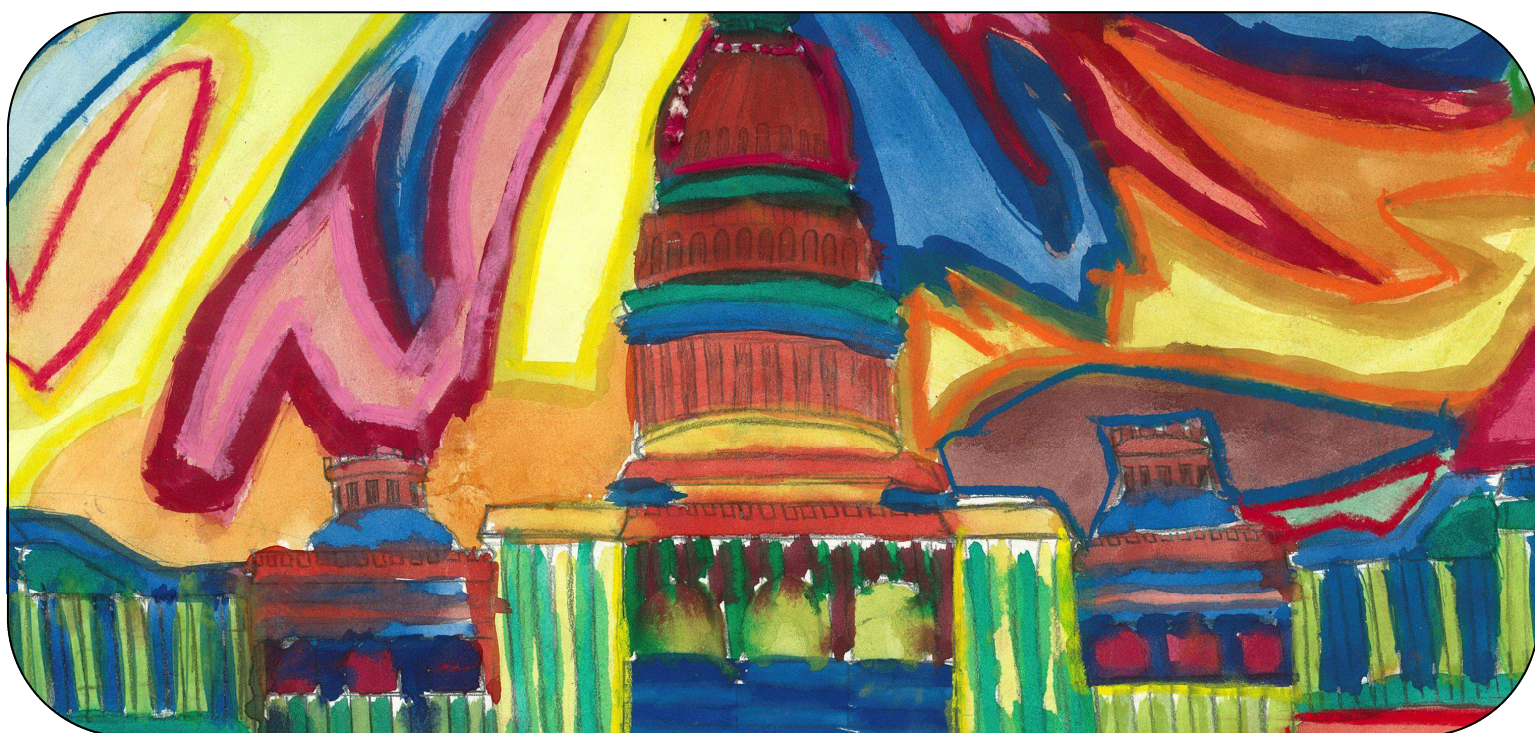
These learning portals provide excellent information, helpful explanations, comprehensive reference lists and a range of practical tools and resources. Most

modules can be completed within 30 -90 minutes. Mental health professional modules assume that the practitioner has some familiarity with the health service systems and health service delivery whilst the modules for disability professionals and carers require no previous knowledge of the health system. In each section there are links to websites and documents to facilitate the learners understanding and provide resources to assist in their practice.

The two key messages to come from the module *Introduction to Intellectual Disability* include that:

1. Intellectual disability involves more than just below average IQ. Intellectual disability means a person also experiences difficulties in various domains of functioning, and has begun to experience these characteristics before the age of 18.
2. Intellectual disability is a complex disability that can affect a person in many different ways, and specific patterns of ability and disability vary widely between people with an intellectual disability.

One of the modules that professionals are likely to find extremely helpful is Module 7 “Consent, decision-making and privacy – a guide for clinicians”. For those not working in the disability field this is frequently a very difficult area to navigate and a cause of considerable concern. It is a complex situation requiring a clinician to determine such things as a client’s capacity to understand and process information, balancing individual rights against the concerns of families and carers and ensuring client’s wishes are respected. A multifaceted perspective is needed to guarantee the right of a person to freely make decisions about their own health care while meeting one’s Duty of Care and legal



Intellectual disability mental health e-Learning

3DN provides free eLearning about intellectual disability to professionals, carers, and consumers. Our goal is to improve your knowledge, skills and confidence, leading to better mental health and wellbeing for people with an intellectual disability.

LEARN MORE

Professionals

This section of the site contains e-learning developed specifically for health/mental health professionals and disability professionals. It may be of interest to other professionals.

[Register](#) [Learn More](#)

Carers

This section of the site contains eLearning developed specifically for families and people caring for someone with an intellectual disability.

[Register](#) [Learn More](#)

Consumers

COMING SOON: This section will have learning for people with an intellectual disability. You can register now and we will let you know when it is ready.

[Learn More](#)



Family &
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Health



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responsibilities.

Packed full of useful information and making clear reference to the current legislation this module can be completed in about 90 minutes. It includes specific reference to the legislation and guidelines in each state of Australia so practitioners from across the country can refer to the documents relevant to them.

This module covers the following:

- Informed Consent;
- Capacity to make decisions;
- Assessing decision-making capacity;
- Supporting decision-making; Authorised substitute decision-makers;
- Principles of substitute decision-making;
- Right to privacy

For instance in the section on capacity they include a Checklist from the Office of the Public Guardian in NSW http://www.publicguardian.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/capacity_toolkit0609.pdf

Below is an overview of the modules for the three various audiences of mental health professionals, disability professionals and carers which is available at <http://www.idhealtheducation.edu.au/>

e-Learning for Mental Health Professionals

Contents

About Intellectual Disability

- Module 1 – Introduction to Intellectual Disability
- Module 2 – Living with an Intellectual Disability
- Module 3 – Intellectual Disability – Changing Perspectives

Fundamental Skills in IDMH

- Module 4 – Communication: the Basics
- Module 5 – Improving your Communication
- Module 6 – Equality in Mental Health Care – A Guide for Clinicians
- Module 7 – Consent, Decision-making & Privacy – A Guide for Clinicians

Clinical Foundations in IDMH

- Module 8 – Mental Disorders in Intellectual Disability
- Module 9 – Assessment of Mental Disorders in Intellectual Disability
- Module 10 – Management of Mental Disorders in Intellectual Disability

Specialist Topics in IDMH

- Module 11 – Challenging Behaviour I – Introduc-

tion

- Module 12 – Challenging Behaviour II – Assessment
- Module 13 – Challenging Behaviour III – Management
- Module 14 – Emergency Mental Health Care 1: Understanding Intellectual Disability in the Emergency Department
- Module 15 – Emergency Mental Health Care 2: Journey Through the Emergency Department

e-Learning for Disability Professionals

Contents

IDMH Introduction

- Module 1 – Why is it Important to know about Mental Health?
- Module 2 – Introduction to Mental Health
- Module 3 – Mental Illness in Intellectual Disability

IDMH Practical Skills

- Module 4 – A Person-Centred Approach
- Module 5 – Recognising Common Mental Illness
- Module 6 – How to Support a Person with a Possible Mental Illness and Intellectual Disability
- Module 7 – Supporting Behaviours of Concern

IDMH Advanced Topics

- Module 8 – Enhancing Interagency Working with Health Professionals
- Module 9 – Treatments and Supports for Mental Illness
- Module 10 – How to Support a Person in a Mental Health Crisis
- Module 11 – Supporting Carers, Colleagues and Self-Care

e-Learning for Carers

Contents

Foundations

- Module 1 – About Intellectual Disability
- Module 2 – About Mental Health

Mental Health and Illness

- Module 3 – Mental Health and Intellectual Disability
- Module 4 – Detecting changes in Mental Health and Wellbeing

Specific Mental Illnesses

- Module 5 – Signs and Symptoms of Mood Disor-

“A downloadable ‘wellbeing record’ is available separate to the carer module...”

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- Module 6 – Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders
- Module 7 – Signs and Symptoms of Schizophrenia and Other Psychotic Disorders
- Module 8 – Signs and Symptoms of Dementia

A downloadable ‘wellbeing record’ is available separate to the carer module. This document will support carers to keep a record of the person’s wellbeing. It is available here: <https://3dn.unsw.edu.au/wellbeing-record>

Resource 3: [Podcasts on responsible prescribing to people with an intellectual disability for health and mental health professionals](#)

Who is it for?

Medical and mental health professionals.

Aims

To educate professionals on safe and effective prescribing practices for the treatment of mental health disorders in people with an intellectual disability.

Contents

- Podcast Series 1. Responsible psychotropic prescribing to adults with an intellectual disability
- Podcast Series 2. Responsible psychotropic prescribing to children and adolescents with an intellectual disability.

Where to find it:

<https://3dn.unsw.edu.au/content/responsible-psychotropic-prescribing-people-intellectual-disability-podcasts>

Resource 4: [A new Positive Cardio-metabolic Health for People with Intellectual Disability e-Learning module aimed at health professionals.](#)

The Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN) at UNSW Sydney has launched two new

e-Learning modules:

- Cardiometabolic health for people with intellectual disability – understanding risk
- Cardiometabolic health for people with intellectual disability – screening and intervention strategies

By completing these courses, health professionals will develop an understanding of the specific cardiometabolic risk factors that affect people with intellectual disability. The modules build on general clinical assessment and intervention skills, and examine ways to adapt these skills to support cardiometabolic health in people with intellectual disability.

The modules belong to a wider suite of resources on Positive Cardiometabolic Health for People with Intellectual Disability, including an early intervention framework; online resources for clinicians, carers and people with intellectual disability; and new podcasts for health professionals on responsible psychotropic prescribing to people with intellectual disability. All resources can be accessed from the 3DN website at: <https://3dn.unsw.edu.au/positive-cardiometabolic-health-ID>

Where to find it:

The modules can be freely accessed at www.idhealtheducation.edu.au

Conclusion

Over 400,000 Australians have an intellectual disability and compared to the general population, they experience poorer health outcomes, including higher rates

“A range of barriers prevent people with an intellectual disability from accessing healthcare...”

of physical and mental health conditions, and premature death from preventable causes. Conditions are frequently undiagnosed, undermanaged or inappropriately treated. A range of barriers prevent people with an intellectual disability from accessing healthcare. For example, stigma and exclusion, the person or their family and carer(s) not being aware of symptoms, and a lack of adequate training for health professionals. The shortage of education opportunities and guidelines in this area contribute to the lack of skills, knowledge and confidence reported by the health and disability workforce when working with people with intellectual disability. As such there is no doubt that these educational programs and resources are urgently needed and provide a valuable professional learning opportunity for health workers or other professionals in this area.

More information about intellectual disability resources can be found at their website: <https://3dn.unsw.edu.au/content/education-resources>

