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Mental health team a finalist in national primary health awards

A mental health care team that has developed an outreach model of care, to close gaps in service delivery, has been named a finalist in the 2013 HESTA Primary Health Care Awards.

The mental health services team — of the Eastern Melbourne Medicare Local — was recognised as one of five finalists in the Team Excellence category, for delivering a unique and effective model of mental health care to parts of rural and semi-rural Victoria.

The awards recognise the dedication and professionalism of those working in primary health care, including physiotherapists, dentists, pharmacists, therapists, GPs, rehabilitation professionals, health educators and medical practice managers.

The mental health services team Director, Craig Maloney, said the service combined three existing federally-funded programs to deliver a new service, where access to mental health services did not previously exist.

“We have pooled the resources of the Mental Health Nurse Incentive Program, the National Suicide Prevention Program and the Better Outcomes in Mental Health Care program, to deliver a new outreach service for people with mental health issues,” Mr Maloney said.

“Our team consists of mental health nurses, allied health providers such as psychologists, social workers and occupational therapists, and staff supporting the suicide prevention program.

“The outreach model was tested and proven during the 2009 Victorian bushfires, providing grief, loss and post-trauma counselling.

“The team’s flexible response means we are able to identify gaps in service delivery and address priority areas of need. As a result, mental health nurses now work at two local colleges with maternal child health services, assisting mothers with mental illness and post-natal depression.

“The team uses a ‘strengths-based’ model of care which focuses on using a person’s strengths to facilitate recovery, rather than just focusing on diagnosis of the problem. We also look at all the patient’s needs and use allied services to address matters such as relationship problems, housing, physical health and general welfare.”

The judges commended the nomination for developing an effective integrated care model that could be adapted to other primary health care situations.

Craig Maloney and the other finalists will attend an awards dinner in Melbourne on 6 June 2013, when the winners will be revealed.

A \$30,000 prize pool will be shared among the winners, courtesy of long-term HESTA awards sponsor, ME Bank. The Young Leader and Individual Distinction Award winners will each receive a \$5,000 ME Bank *EveryDay* Transaction Account and a \$5,000 education grant. The Team Excellence Award winner will receive a \$10,000 development grant to put towards the implementation of their program or initiative.

HESTA is the leading super fund for health and community services, with more than 750,000 members and \$22 billion in assets. More people in health and community services choose HESTA for their super.

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