Equitable access for young people to mental health services in regional Victoria

Is it really possible?

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Why a youth specific mental health service?

- Majority of people experience their first episode of mental illness between 15 and 25 years
- Young people were not accessing services in a timely manner (adult services were not seeing many aged between 18-25 years)
- Emphasis on early intervention
- Increase community understanding of youth mental health issues
Grampians Region AMHS

GRAMPIANS REGION
48,610 sq km
21.4% of Victoria’s Area
CATCHMENT POPULATION
4.4% of State Population*
*(Grampians Region + Maryborough)
What service does the young person experiencing psychotic symptoms receive if they live in Ballarat?
What if that young person lives on a farm outside a small rural town in western Victoria?
How did we address the gaps in service for young people with mental illness in our rural areas?

- Service Redesign
- Recruitment
- Retention
- Leadership
Service Redesign

- Victoria’s Mental Health Strategy ‘Because Mental Health Matters 2009-2019’ Early in life, early in illness, early in episode

- CAMHS (0-18 years) services redesigned to Child & Youth Services (0-25 years)

- Locally we created:
  - Infant & Child Team 0-14 years
  - Youth Team 15-25 years

- Conscious decision to allocate 25% of the clinical positions to the Wimmera area, the most rural and isolated part of our region
Recruitment

- Youth Team 16 full-time mental health clinicians
- 3 full-time positions in Horsham & 1 full-time position in Ararat/Stawell
- All clinical positions were successfully filled
- Health professionals were attracted to the integrated model of work where they are able to:
  - engage in early intervention
  - mental health promotion
  - contemporary mental health treatment
Retention

- All clinicians have been with the team since commencement 14 months ago
- To support retention mental health clinicians were provided with:
  - training in evidence based, psychosocial intervention
  - internal and external supervision
  - regular presence of senior staff, the clinical manager and consultant psychiatrist in the outlying offices
  - Daily team meeting via videoconference
- Integrated model of treatment allows for variety in the work from prevention to early intervention and ongoing treatment
Leadership

- Support from all levels
  - Hospital Board
  - Executive Director Mental Health & Director of Clinical Services
  - Team Manager

- With effective leadership you can establish a critical mass of well trained staff so the young person out on the farm gets the same treatment as the one in the large regional city.
How does a rural mental health service meet the needs of young people?

- Commitment to meet the needs of young people across the whole region
- Clear vision
  - Client centred, family inclusive, evidence based, recovery orientated model of care
  - Redesigning service system
  - Adjusting resources
- Extensive training program
  - Skilled workforce
- Building a positive team culture
  - Culture of putting clients and families at the centre
  - Culture of early intervention
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