



## PROJECT OVERVIEW:

### **Toward the identification and minimisation of depression and psychological distress in family caregivers of people receiving palliative care**

#### **Purpose:**

The first stage of this project seeks to examine strategies for the assessment of mental health problems in family caregivers of patients with advanced disease. The second stage seeks to develop best practice guidelines for health professionals for assessment of mental health problems in this population.

#### **Duration:**

Duration of project: 33 months  
Commencement date: 01/03/2007

#### **Funding Body:**

*beyondblue: the national depression initiative.*

#### **Principal Investigator:**

Dr Peter Hudson  
Director, Centre for Palliative Care Education & Research

#### **Co-Investigators:**

Dr Cheryl Remedios, Dr Di Clifton, Mr Michael Crewdson, Mr Christopher Hall, Prof David Clarke, Prof Tom Trauer, Ms Amanda Bolleter, Mr Michael Bramwell

#### **Project Officer:**

Dr Chantal Ski  
Research Fellow, Centre for Palliative Care Education & Research

#### **Clinical Partners:**

Mercy Western Palliative Care and Caritas Christi Hospice

#### **Project Summary:**

Palliative Care is holistic, patient and family centred care provided for dying people and their families, before, during and after death. It acknowledges dying as a physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural process that is experienced uniquely by each person and family. Palliative care services are involved in the care of patients and families who are distressed, or who are at risk of being distressed as a consequence of this process (*Palliative Care Australia - Standards for Palliative Care Provision, 1999*). Currently the evidence base for preventing, assessing and responding to depression, anxiety and prolonged grief in family caregivers of people receiving palliative care at home is suboptimal. As family caregivers comprise a significant section of the Australian population this is seen as an area that has been overlooked. This 3 year longitudinal study will have two stages. The first stage of this project seeks to evaluate a strategy designed to more effectively screen family caregivers of people with advanced disease (such as cancer) for mental health problems. The second stage seeks to develop best practice guidelines for health professionals in order to better respond to and minimise depression and psychological distress in this population.

**If you have any questions about this study, please contact Centre for Palliative Care Education & Research at 03 9416 0000 or [cpcpa@medstv.unimelb.edu.au](mailto:cpcpa@medstv.unimelb.edu.au)**

July 2007