

New resources launched for those on the mental health front line

More than 230,000¹ Australians are living with schizophrenia, which in turn may have a significant effect on those close to them. During Mental Health Month, the need to further support those who look after the mentally ill is being recognised with a new health coaching program and online resource for the carers of people with schizophrenia – CareCompass and Fullstoryschizophrenia.com.au.

CareCompass

Janssen-Cilag Pty Limited (Janssen), is pleased to launch CareCompass, which provides a one-to-one health coaching program for carers.

CareCompass will be run on behalf of Janssen by Partizan Worldwide Pty Ltd, a specialist provider of health outcomes programs. The program aims to provide carers with disease and treatment information, assist with referrals to existing support services and resources and help carers set goals that are focused on their wellbeing so that they in turn can provide better support for the person they care for. These goals may be as modest as joining a local walking group, help with nutrition guidance or taking time to catch up with friends; small steps that could make a big difference. The program offers carers regular telephone coaching support for up to two years.

Over the last decade, the delivery of mental health services has shifted from institutions to the community, which often means that families carry more and more of the burden of supportive care.¹

This can be a heavy load. A psychotic illness diagnosis is stressful for family members who may have feelings of guilt and shame and who may have to cope with loved ones who have difficult and demanding behaviour.¹

Mary Oxley-Griffiths' husband Jeremy Oxley was diagnosed with schizophrenia before the two met almost seven years ago. Mary, a Queensland mother of twins and registered nurse, and Jeremy, well known as the front man of rock group The Sunnyboys, hit it off immediately. In 2011, after a two year engagement, they married. Mary is a passionate advocate for the mentally ill and those who help care for them.

She says small rewards 'just for you' are important while managing the stress of looking after a loved one with schizophrenia. Physical activity is also a good idea but she says it can be difficult for carers to find the necessary time and the motivation.

"It can be extremely frustrating for family and friends but you have to remember it is more frightening for the person living with the condition than anyone else, as that person feels the torment every day," Mary says.

SANE Australia CEO, Jack Heath, said that SANE Australia, a national charity helping all Australians affected by mental illness, acknowledged the need for specific support services for carers and recently launched a national online community for carers.

"People who live with and help care for those with mental illness do a remarkable job. We have recently gained some fresh insights into the challenges they face through our new online carers forum. We know they are hungry for information about illnesses such as schizophrenia and would benefit from additional, individualised support," Mr Heath said.

CareCompass, which was developed with health care professionals and insights from carers, will be offered from 1 November. It will be initially offered to carers of people who are prescribed Janssen schizophrenia treatments.

An important step in the CareCompass enrolment process is that carers can only access the program if they have the consent of the person they care for.

Enrolment in CareCompass for eligible carers is by referral from a health care professional.

Fullstoryschizophrenia.com.au

Janssen is also pleased to be launching a new online destination for families and friends seeking information on schizophrenia: www.Fullstoryschizophrenia.com.au.

This site recognises the fact that family and friends of people with schizophrenia can feel like they are in the dark and that they struggle to understand the full story, especially in the early days of the diagnosis. They want to help but don't have enough information in order to do so. This new site is designed to enlighten carers with information about schizophrenia and links to other resources designed to help people support a family member or friend.

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Issued by Ogilvy PR Health on behalf of Janssen-Cilag Pty Limited (Janssen Australia).
Interviews available with Mary Oxley-Griffiths and SANE Australia CEO Jack Heath.

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About Janssen Australia

At Janssen Australia, we focus on some of the most devastating diseases and the most complex medical challenges of our time, across the following five therapeutic areas: immunology (e.g. psoriasis, arthritis, Crohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis), oncology (e.g. prostate cancer and multiple myeloma), neuroscience (e.g. schizophrenia), cardiovascular and metabolic diseases (e.g. diabetes) and infectious diseases and vaccines (e.g. HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C).

Janssen comprises companies with nearly 40,000 employees in 150 countries around the world. We work within and beyond our communities, globally, to bring innovative treatments for serious unmet medical needs. We make extraordinary efforts to help people enjoy ordinary moments.

Driven by our commitment to patients, we develop sustainable, integrated healthcare solutions by working side-by-side with healthcare stakeholders, based on partnerships of trust and transparency. More information can be found at www.janssen.com.au.

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References

1. McGrath, J. and Davies, J. (1999) 'Schizophrenia: New Aspects of Management', Current Therapeutics, August 1999: 14-22.