



Media Release

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Health is a laughing matter

Patients at Tasmania's Aged Care Rehabilitation Unit are laughing their way to good health through the Unit's laughter therapy program.

Ms Robyn Bishop, Coordinator of the laughter therapy program at the Aged Care Rehabilitation Unit in Tasmania, will report on the study at the 7th National Rural Health Conference, which will be held at the Grand Chancellor Hotel, Hobart from March 1-4.

Ms Bishop says the Unit's laughter therapy program has been highly successful. "People join the laughter therapy group for friendship and company, to forget about pain and other health-related problems and to feel happier and lighter about life," said Ms Bishop.

Groups in the Unit's metropolitan and rural programs meet for two hour laughter therapy sessions that involve deep breathing and relaxation methods, telling jokes and playing games, laughter chanting, positive affirmations and a lively morning tea. The sessions end of course, with cheery goodbyes and as one participant chuckled, "it's been great to meet new people and see the funny side of things".

While laughter therapy sessions are light-hearted and fun, the health benefits provided are nothing to laugh at. International research reveals that laughter therapy reduces stress and enhances well-being and confidence. It is a powerful weapon against depression and it reduces social isolation, which is especially important in rural areas. Laughter taps into our own physiological and psychological healing powers and when practiced regularly, has a positive effect on our attitudes and relationships.

The unit's laughter therapy program has attracted considerable interest throughout Tasmania and the Unit has developed a laughter therapy kit to cope with demand for information from a diverse range of groups, including businesses and government agencies.

Ms Bishop will present her findings to the conference delegates at 9:30am on Tuesday March 4, 2003 in the Macquarie Room of the Grand Chancellor Hotel, Hobart.

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The launch of the Laughter Therapy Action Kit will take place at 10:45am on Tuesday March 4, 2003 outside the Norfolk Room of the Grand Chancellor Hotel, Hobart.

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7th National Rural Health Conference, 1 – 4 March 2003, Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart
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