

MEDIA RELEASE

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**2015 ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTH MINISTER'S AWARD
FOR EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH**

ANU MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCHER TO RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

An Australian National University researcher who has led the development of online self-help programs aimed at reducing symptoms of mental health disorders has been awarded the 2015 Commonwealth Health Minister's Award.

Dr Philip Batterham, a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Research Fellow at the National Institute for Mental Health Research, will receive this prestigious award at the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) Gala Dinner in Melbourne on Thursday night.

Drawing on his expertise in psychology, biostatistics and population health, Dr Batterham's research aims to tailor online self-help programs to screen for symptoms of depression, anxiety disorders, substance use and suicidality. The key to these programs lies in their flexibility – they can be personalised based on an individual's needs and adapted as needs change over time. In contrast to previous screening programs, which have generally focused on detection of specific disorders, Dr Batterham's screening tools covers the whole spectrum of mental health conditions, which is important given that multiple disorders often co-occur. Dr Batterham's team has recently tested their methods in a large screen of 5000 participants; it is hoped that the information gleaned from this important study will facilitate the personalisation of interventions to reduce symptoms associated with mental health disorders.

Dr Batterham recounts the phone call informing him that he'd won the Commonwealth Health Minister's Award:

"I was very excited but also surprised, given that there were many other great researchers in contention. I really appreciate this recognition of my research and what this prize will do to help further my research into improving the wellbeing of people with mental health disorders."

As one of nine National Health Priority Areas, mental health is an area that demands more research attention. It is hoped that by providing tailored solutions for patients, Dr Batterham's research will help the most vulnerable in our society.

Editor's Note: Interview and photo opportunities

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