

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Depression in the workplace: research forum

Depression in the workplace is the focus of a research forum being held at the University of Tasmania today.

The *Building Healthy and Productive Workplaces* forum includes several expert speakers and aims to develop a research agenda to address the challenges facing Tasmanian organisations in relation to the health of their employees.

Keynote speaker is Mr Royce Fairbrother, Chair of the Premier's Physical Activity Council, who has implemented workplace health and wellbeing initiatives in the construction industry and is driving the development and implementation of the Get Moving at Work kit.

The forum will also hear from Dr Angela Martin, from the UTAS School of Management, who is part of a new UTAS research project that will explore options for introducing mental health programs into the workplace and how these could impact on productivity.

“Research has linked depression to impaired work performance, high levels of absenteeism and early retirement, but organisations have been slow to develop evidence-based workplace mental health promotion strategies,” Dr Martin said.

Dr Kristy Sanderson, from the Menzies Research Institute, an Institute of UTAS, will discuss her research on the phenomenon of “presenteeism”: employees who come to work when they are unwell.

“The low unemployment rate and skills shortage means that many people will keep working when they are sick, and we need to understand the impact this is having on individuals, their co-workers, and employer,” said Dr Sanderson.

The forum will discuss a research agenda for Tasmania that incorporates public, private and community organisation perspectives, including:

- Managing and estimating health-related productivity loss and ‘presenteeism’;
- Creating work environments that promote health;
- Building manager’s capacity to deal effectively with mental health issues;
- Establishing an evidence base for strategies for workplace health promotion.

The forum is being held at the UTAS Hobart Campus (University Club) until noon.

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