



# Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health

Trauma related research, training and  
policy development



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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Surviving and Thriving: New Research into Emotional Recovery after Traumatic Injury

The Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health is beginning a new study into the psychological impact of traumatic injury. The research, among the first of its kind in the world, has the potential to benefit the between 300,000 and 400,000 Australians who are severely injured in a car or work accident or assault each year.

“About 25 per cent of people are likely to have serious psychological problems following traumatic injury such as posttraumatic stress disorder or depression,” Dr Meaghan O’Donnell, Senior Research Fellow at the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, said.

“Thanks to advancements in medical science, more and more people survive physical injuries. But we need to look at how well people survive.

“Currently, people get excellent care to help them recover from their physical injuries and we hope that this research will lead to them getting equally effective care to aid their emotional recovery.”

Dr O’Donnell said that the study was the latest part of the *Traumatic Injury Research Program* conducted by the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health over the past seven years.

“This new study will find out if a stepped approach to providing mental health services is useful to identify, prevent and treat posttraumatic stress disorder and depression in people with traumatic injuries,” Dr O’Donnell said.

“First, we will screen all trauma patients admitted to the Alfred and Royal Melbourne hospitals over an 18 month period to see who is at high risk for mental health problems.

“Then, we will follow up with them a month later to assess their depression and anxiety levels and offer them free psychological treatment if they are having difficulties.

“The treatment we’ll provide is very effective for people who have experienced a traumatic event, but we need to identify the best time to provide it. So we’ll offer it to people who are having problems either six weeks or six months following their injury.”

The Victorian Trauma Foundation provided a grant of \$436,000 for this study, building on its longstanding support for the research program. The study begins in November 2006 and expected to be completed in April 2009.

The Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health, at the University of Melbourne, specialises in trauma-related research, policy development and training. The Centre is leading this research in collaboration with the National Trauma Research Institute, and the Alfred and Royal Melbourne hospitals.

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