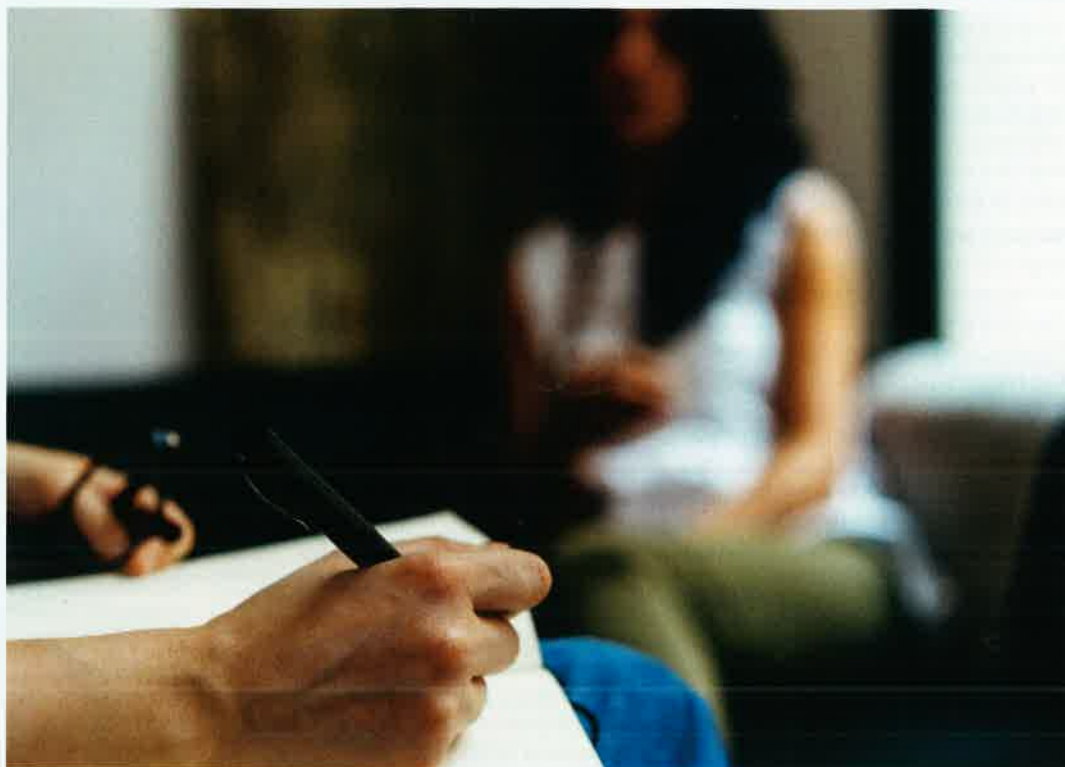




Rasa Kabaila

Rasa Kabaila is a Nurse Practitioner working in community mental health (acute care service) Mid North Coast LHD.

Implementation of an innovative nurse led service to support treatment for depression in primary care (OptiMA2)



Overwhelming evidence shows that achieving early full remission in depression is crucial as residual depressive symptoms are the strongest predictor of early relapse and are strongly associated with poorer functional outcomes.

Additionally early full remission can reduce the indirect costs associated with depression.

However, evidence also demonstrates that primary care clinicians are not optimising timely treatments for their clients that experience depression which has resulted in the failure to achieve early remission.

Further, evidence shows, that when clients with moderate to severe depression seek secondary care they are also not receiving the specialist care they require.

To address this issue in the Mid North Coast Local Health District, we instigated a trial, known as the OptiMA2 study, to help extend specialist care into primary care. The OptiMA2 model assists GP's to optimise their treatment for clients presenting with

moderate to severe depression. It involves using Nurse Practitioner led care pathways, supported by an online system capturing patient rated outcomes, to optimise treatments.

To examine the feasibility and acceptability of the care pathway a study was instigated using qualitative research techniques, quality improvement science and co-design methodology.

WHY ENGAGE IN THIS RESEARCH ACTIVITY?

I chose to engage in this research activity because my role in the project allows me as a Nurse Practitioner to work to my full scope of practice and fill service gaps within health.

Within my Nurse Practitioner role in this project, I have enabled GP's clients to access timely, specialist and holistic care. This in turn, bridges the gap between primary health and public health. As this project is a quality improvement project in the Mid North Coast Local Health District and having gained research ethics approval, I am able to demonstrate the ability and contribution of a Nurse Practitioner. My hope is that this project will further show why more Nurse Practitioner positions are needed in healthcare.

STUDY PROCESS

The OptiMA2 study is a mixed method pilot service implementation study, utilising: literature reviews on service implementation models; service data gap analysis; qualitative interviews and focus group methodology.

As part of the research, I have set up and run the Nurse Practitioner depression clinic where I assess and treat all clients. Care plans are discussed and shared collaboratively with clients, psychiatrists and referring GP's.

Working collaboratively with the research team, Richard, Sarah, Pia and Rob, we met weekly to discuss progress and how the care model can be improved. This process is ever evolving through using quality improvement develop tools such as driver diagrams and Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles through the Quality Improvement Data System (QIDS).

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS SO FAR

From July-October 2020, 12 clients were referred to the clinic. Out of the 12 clients, the first three clients have reached remission in less than three months. Six of the clients have only recently had their initial assessment. Two clients decided not to join the trial and one client is yet to be seen.

Barriers to clients joining the clinic or being seen for their treatment in a timely way have been work and caring responsibilities, not wanting to attend any more appointments (or fill out more paper work) as well as difficulties reaching the client by telephone.

In September 2020, Pia and Rob ran a focus group for the initial cohort of clients and GP's to obtain qualitative feedback about their experiences in the OptiMA2 study. Pia's role was important as she has a special ability in knowing which questions to ask client's about their experience pertinent to the OptiMA2 clinic, given her own personal experience as a healthcare consumer.

The initial focus group for clients produced positive feedback; the clients felt that this clinic should have been made available years ago. The clients felt listened to, cared for and appreciated the time that was invested in their appointments, especially during the initial assessment (which is crucial in formulating the best treatment plan possible).

Constructive feedback from the clients related to the online system where they felt that some of the questions were difficult to answer.

The initial GP focus group's feedback was positive. The GPs stated they had come to better understand and appreciate the Nurse Practitioner role and felt they had a pathway to timely specialist mental healthcare that was demonstrating positive clinical outcomes.

Continually engaging and educating the local health workforce on the longer-term value of this pathway will be an important part of embedding it in a sustainable way. In addition, once this clinic expands, more Nurse Practitioner positions are required to sustain the client numbers.

IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION

Co-investigator Medical Student, Robert Oakeshott from the UNSW Rural Clinical School recently completed a clinical report of the findings of the OptiMA2 trial through UNSW.

The research team has provided a presentation discussing the OptiMA2 trial at Grand Rounds in the Mid North Coast Local Health District. As the Nurse Practitioner, I am still seeing clients who have been referred to the OptiMA2 study, the final results have not yet been analysed.

The results of the OptiMA2 trial will focus on the qualitative analysis of the co-design process to implement the initial care pathway.

The research team intends to submit findings of OptiMA2 through scientific journal publication as well as disseminating research findings through oral presentation and poster presentation at academic conferences within Australia and internationally.

OptiMA3 will be the next stage of this research project, in which we are in the process of writing for ethics approval. OptiMA3 will examine the cumulative clinical outcomes to consider if increased rates of remission are achieved and search for potential predictive factors to individualise treatments for depression.

The long term goal for this clinic is to support the development of community based care-extender models, including specialist nurses, pharmacists and GPs, to extend specialist mental health expertise to larger primary care populations where the greatest burden of mental illness occurs.

The research team for this project includes:

Coordinating Principal Investigator:
Dr Richard Tranter, Psychiatrist & District Medical Director for Mental Health, Mid North Coast LHD.

Co-investigator: Rasa Kabaila, Nurse Practitioner Mental Health Nurse, Mid North Coast LHD.

Co-investigator: Dr Sarah Mollard, General Practitioner, Five Star Medical Centre, Port Macquarie.

Co-investigator: Pia Latimer, Peer worker, Mid North Coast LHD.

Co-investigator: Robert Oakeshott, Medical Student, UNSW Rural Clinical School.

