



MEDIA RELEASE

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Online insomnia treatment also prevents depression

Insomnia is closely associated with many mental illnesses, both as a symptom and a potential trigger.

It co-occurs most commonly in major depression with around 80% of people diagnosed with depression experiencing insomnia. Interestingly, around 40% of those suffering insomnia may also have undiagnosed yet clinically significant depressive symptoms.

We know that **people are far more likely to seek help for insomnia over depression**—probably due to the perceived stigma associated with mental illness. Research shows that Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) can be used to effectively treat and prevent both conditions.

Black Dog Institute researchers, in partnership with the Australian National University, University of Sydney, and the University of Virginia, have trialled an online CBT-based insomnia intervention to see if it can reduce depression symptoms and prevent escalation into major depression.

Called SHUTi, the intervention was delivered online to over 500 trial participants. A further 500 participants were allocated to another online program containing information about general health.

Results, published today in the prestigious journal *Lancet Psychiatry*, showed that the SHUTi treatment group experienced significantly reduced insomnia, anxiety and depression, with these improvements persisting for at least 6 months.

Chief Investigator Professor Helen Christensen says there are two important conclusions to take from these results.

“This is the first trial in the world to demonstrate that CBT-based insomnia treatment can also have a significant impact on the development of depression.”

“Since insomnia treatment is rarely stigmatised, this will remove a significant hurdle for those people who feel uncomfortable seeking help.”

“Just as we have sun cream to prevent the development of skin cancer, use of an insomnia treatment like SHUTi before depression symptoms escalate will essentially prevent transition into major depression, saving costs and lives.”

“It is also of significant importance for young people, who may not be able to specifically identify depression symptoms but are aware of their insomnia.”

“Secondly, the success of the SHUTi program has significant implications for the clinical delivery of mental health interventions.



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“This program had the same level of effects expected of face to face treatment but was delivered by automated software, giving us a cost-effective way for us to quickly distribute quality treatment and prevention programs across large geographic areas and to a wide range of users.”

Contact Gayle McNaught on 0401625905 or g.mcnaught@blackdog.org.au for more information.

What is SHUTi?

SHUTi™ or Sleep Healthy Using the Internet, is an innovative, online program for adults with insomnia. Designed by researchers at the University of Virginia in the US, SHUTi™ helps people with insomnia identify and change thoughts or behaviours that influence sleep patterns through engaging stories, quizzes and activities using a technique called Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

SHUTi™ is accessed via a commercial company called BeHealthSolutions in the USA . Through our research partnership with the University of Virginia, Black Dog Institute have negotiated a reduced rate with the to enable Australians to access this effective program. If you are interested in signing up to use SHUTi™, please follow the link below. In addition to the reduced subscription rate, BeHealthSolutions will provide a small percentage of earnings back to Black Dog Institute to support ongoing research into effective preventative programs for depression and anxiety.

<http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/public/gettinghelp/shuti.cfm>

Read more about the research Black Dog Institute has conducted with SHUTi here:

[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(15\)00536-2/abstract](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(15)00536-2/abstract)