



# On-site psychologist brings benefits

## David Brill

GPs can reap the maximum benefit from the Better Access scheme by ensuring psychologists are located on-site, a conference has heard.

Co-locating improves communication and teamwork, enhances referrals and offers support for GPs, clinical psychologist and general practice researcher Dr Robyn Vines (PhD)

told the International Congress of Applied Psychology (ICAP) in Melbourne last week.

"This collaborative care model is, we believe, the way forward," said Dr Vines, who practises at three general practices in Bathurst, NSW.

"GPs have found it incredibly supportive, as prior to this they had to manage all the problems themselves. You don't need gran-

diose GP super clinics for this... You can use existing structures on the ground."

Bathurst GP Dr Ross Wilson echoed Dr Vines' comments, saying the decision to rent rooms to psychologists six years ago had "taken the load" off GPs.

He also defended the oft-criticised Better Access scheme – which made up around 85% of his psychology referrals – saying

it had halved his prescriptions of antidepressants.

Conference delegates also heard overseas perspectives on access to psychological services through primary care.

Dr Vines, who led the 2001 Clinical Psychology in General Practice trial, said Australia fared well – lagging behind Norway but "way ahead" of Canada and the US.



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