MENTAL HEALTH
WELLBEING & NEUROSCIENCE
AT FLINDERS UNIVERSITY

ORA MA
INSTITUTE

Flinders UNIVERSITY | ORAMA INSTITUTE
Almost one in two Australian adults experience mental illness in their lifetime. Many of us have personally grappled with a mental health condition, or have extended support to colleagues, friends or family.

The personal and professional cost to individuals from all walks of life, and the social and economic costs to our society, are significant.

Recognising this, Flinders University has established the Órama Institute, uniquely bringing together our University’s existing research strengths with those of our external partners.

Spanning our expertise in neuroscience, psychiatry, psychology, allied health, engineering, social science and public health, Órama represents a unique and comprehensive blend of research capabilities that utilise our health infrastructure extending from Adelaide and regional South Australia, through the centre of Australia to Darwin in the Northern Territory.

Together with our partners and supporters, the Órama Institute will develop new solutions and deliver real-world outcomes to revolutionise how we understand, treat and one day, hopefully, prevent mental illness.

Professor Colin J Stirling
President and Vice-Chancellor
Flinders University

The Órama Institute is a multi-disciplinary research institute at Flinders University with a focus on research and discovery related to brain and mind and their relationship to the body.

The world’s mental health is a global concern.

With up to 450 million people experiencing mental health issues at any one time, we need real-world solutions for what could be the defining social health crisis of the 21st century.

The Órama Institute is committed to research and discovery that will create those solutions.

Órama

Ancient Greek: vision, sight and ‘a wide view of’

“Of course we cannot always cure people, but we can surely change the course of an illness if it is treated early and consistently well.”

Professor Patrick McGorry
Executive Director
Orygen The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health
At Flinders University we have a vision for a community that understands mental health problems and supports those who are challenged by such difficulties.

We have a vision for communities and organisations that are psychologically healthy and ensure the wellbeing of all individuals who belong to them.

We envisage health services that understand all those who have the lived experience of a mental health problem, and an accessible health system that provides effective interventions for those in distress no matter where they live or their circumstances.

Our vision includes engagement with those who have the lived experience of mental health challenges to share their journey and problem solve with us.

Communities where suicide has been expunged. Indigenous communities that are complete with emotional and psychological wellbeing. An educational system that helps build resilience in children to prevent or minimise future distress.

At Flinders University we have a vision for an institute that brings together the best possible expertise locally, nationally and internationally to help us create all of this through science, discovery and discourse.

When we first looked to create an institute with a focus on the mental health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, the name Órama soon came to the forefront.

Órama is an ancient Greek term for vision. It represents our commitment to use insights from the experiences of people affected by mental health challenges and our research into the human mind and brain to improve the services that we provide or to prevent the need for such services.

Órama is a multidisciplinary research institute based at Flinders University, representing a unique blend of research capabilities centred on the disciplines of basic and applied neuroscience, psychiatry, psychology, allied health, engineering, social science, education and public health.

Research at Órama takes a whole-of-person approach, incorporating research at the brain and cellular level through to research around people’s experiences, health systems, service delivery models and educational or preventative science.

Our research draws upon five main themes that reflect our current strengths and best prospects for future growth. These themes are:

- Mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Mental health disorders
- Trauma and violence
- Services
- Neuroscience and neurocognition

The Órama Institute for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Neuroscience at Flinders University will enable impactful research that will ultimately improve mental health and wellbeing outcomes for all people and communities across Australia and the world.

That is our commitment. Join us to fulfil our vision.

Professor Mike Kyrios

**Theme Lead:**

**Vice President & Executive Dean**

Flinders College of Education, Psychology and Social Work

**Theme Lead: Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing**

Throughout his career, internationally recognised clinical psychologist Professor Mike Kyrios has undertaken a range of academic, practice, professional & administrative roles. He also holds adjunct positions at the Australian National University, the University of Melbourne and Swinburne University.

Mike’s work encompasses the biopsychosocial spectrum (inclusive of behavioural, cognitive, neuropsychological, developmental and self-based conceptual frameworks and methodologies).

He has published extensively in more than 160 publications and has received over $21.5 million in grant funding during his career. Mike sits on a range of national and international editorial and review committees and is a prolific presenter to conferences in Australia and internationally.

He has been President of the Australian Psychological Society, National Chair of the College of Clinical Psychologists, and the recipient of national and international awards.

**Órama’s Unique Features**

- **Focus on Recovery and Lived Experience**
- **Biopsychosocial Framework**
- **Brain/Mind/Body Connections**
- **Lifespan Approach**
- **Workforce Development**
- **Unique Central Australian Footprint**

**Professor Mike Kyrios**
MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Australia is no stranger to mental health issues. Around 45 percent of Australians between the ages of 16 and 85 will experience a mental health condition at some point in their lifetime*.

Flinders is conducting research to improve wellbeing and resilience across the country, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and rural and remote communities.

Wellbeing and resilience are intrinsically linked to protection against the development of mental illness, and recovery from mental health issues. Higher degrees of wellbeing are associated with lower hospital utilisation rates, improved recovery from surgery and illness, and improved quality of life and disease management in chronic illness.

Flinders University has a competitive advantage in the translation of psychological health and wellbeing across the community. In addition, our partnership with the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute's (SAHMRI) Wellbeing and Resilience Centre gives us upscalable capabilities for the dissemination of wellbeing interventions. Key collaborations with Tsinghua University (China), Tecmilenio University (Mexico), What Works Wellbeing (UK) and others strengthen the capabilities and research of our partnership.

Flinders is currently conducting a range of funded wellbeing projects across public, education, community and private sectors. Numerous Honours, postgraduate and postdoctoral projects are focusing on matters relating to measurement and assessment of wellbeing, conceptual development, and wellbeing interventions in various health contexts.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND RURAL AND REMOTE

Lead - Professor Tim Carey
Director, Centre for Remote Health

Lead - Tanja Hirvonen
Lecturer - Mental Health, Centre for Remote Health

Access to mental health services in rural and remote areas can be difficult. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular face a number of barriers to service access, which makes it vitally important that treatments are both effective and appropriate.

Flinders researchers understand that for treatments to be appropriate, there must be an acknowledgement of cultural context and relevance, as mental health is understood differently in different cultures. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for example, prefer to consider mental health from a Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) perspective rather than a mainstream medical perspective.

Current research at Flinders by Professor Tim Carey and Tanja Hirvonen includes the development of appropriate measures of SEWB to promote high-quality interventions with continued effectiveness. A project is also underway to develop protocols and guidelines for the appropriate assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples approaching Emergency Departments with self-harm or suicidal ideas.

Flinders is working with multiple groups and government departments, including the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance, the Australian Psychological Society and Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association.


A WIDE VIEW
AT THE ÓRAMA INSTITUTE
Mental Health, Wellbeing and Neuroscience research:
making a difference.

Stemming from a range of academic disciplines, this university-led network of researchers, specialists, policy-influencers and changemakers seamlessly blend the fields of psychology, neuroscience, psychiatry, allied health, engineering, social science and public health.

From a microscopic level through to policy change, the Institute will explore, initiate and innovate services and models of care, commercialising where feasible. South Australia provides a perfect demographic context to investigate mental health solutions and models of care with local, national and global implications.

flinders.edu.au/mental-health
THEME: MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

Mental health disorders have a substantial impact in Australia. They affect mood, thinking and behaviour, productivity and quality of life. The financial cost is huge; an estimated $11 billion per year*. The social cost is even higher, particularly in regional and rural areas.

Our research spans the spectrum of mental health disorders, and aims to reduce the impact, socially and financially, that mental health disorders have on the Australian population.

*Price Waterhouse Coopers (2014)

**SUBTHEME:** EATING DISORDERS

Lead - Professor Tracey Wade

Matthew Flinders Distinguished Professor
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work

15 per cent of Australian teenage girls are diagnosed with an eating disorder before they turn 19. Struggles with eating disorders can be lifelong, if not life ending. The prevalence of eating disorders and body image problems is also increasing in boys.

Flinders University researchers are forming a picture of eating disorders as a genetic predisposition triggered by environmental factors like weight-related bullying, stressful life changes, and traumatic events. We are also engaged in preventative, evidence-based community programs, and consulting with government and relevant organisations around building up capacity to prevent and treat eating disorders.

Key partnerships with groups including the Statewide Eating Disorder Service, headspace and the National Eating Disorders Collaboration are helping us investigate and develop services for eating disorders, and aims to reduce the impact, socially and financially, that mental health disorders have on the Australian population.

**SUBTHEME:** ADDICTIONS

Lead - Professor Malcolm Battersby

Head of Psychiatry, College of Medicine and Public Health

Problem gambling is an emerging public health issue in Australia and around the world, with around 3.5% of the Australian population experiencing serious gambling problems that may require them to seek help. The spillover effects are significant.

For each person with gambling problems it is known that between 7 and 10 others are adversely affected.

Flinders University has a recognised strength in research into the causes, prevalence, treatment and long-term effects of problematic gambling.

Our partnerships with Beyond Blue, Drug and Alcohol Services SA, the World Health Organisation Drug and Alcohol Section, the International Think Tank on Gambling Research and other national and international groups and government departments are helping Flinders’ researchers develop validated assessment tools that will lead to continuous improvements in the management of behavioural addictions.

**SUBTHEME:** MANAGING COMORBIDITY

Lead - Professor Reg Nixon

Professor, College of Medicine and Public Health

Flinders University produces research focused on chronic conditions and dementia.

We are internationally recognised in the field of chronic condition management within diverse populations with both comorbidity and multimorbidity scenarios.

**SUBTHEME:** POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) AND TRAUMA RELATED DISORDERS

Lead - Professor Sharon Lawn

Professor, College of Medicine and Public Health

Flinders University research explores personalised approaches to standard treatment for clients with complex presentations by better individualising treatments to match their problems. Activities within this theme also examine a stepped-care approach to PTSD, including increased accessibility of services by using online and telehealth methods.

If we can improve treatment for 10-15% of people who actually seek help, this means 50,000 – 75,000 PTSD sufferers will be better off in just one year. Working with national and international partners ranging from headspace and Phoenix Australia to the National Center for PTSD (USA) will help us improve current treatments and develop new approaches for sufferers across their lifespan.

Flinders University researchers are conducting world-leading research across a range of mental health disorders including eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorders, psychosis, PTSD, behavioural addictions and dementia.
Violence is a public health and human rights issue resulting in considerable trauma for all those affected. Violence can take many forms, but the most common form experienced by children and young people is bullying. Its sequelae are physically harmful, psychologically damaging and socially isolating, impacting not only the victim but the perpetrator and bystanders.

Identifiable associated outcomes include, amongst others, depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation. For example, economic modelling indicates that for the one in five young Australians who are seriously victimised the cost to society in terms of illness, medication, psychological care and reduced academic performance exceeds $0.5 billion annually.

Ongoing school-based intervention programs developed at Flinders University are translated and implemented in countries including Japan, Greece, Malta and Italy demonstrate robust and sustainable reductions in the levels of victimization, and enhanced coping skills and mental health and wellbeing.

Other research investigates the impact of domestic violence on women, engaging men to address domestic violence, and service provision for Aboriginal communities experiencing family violence. Flinders’ partners include Education Services Australia, the South Australian Department for Education, Catholic Education South Australia and the Flinders Centre for Student Wellbeing & Prevention of Violence (SWAPv) Research Centre at Flinders.

Flinders University research is leading the way in creating evidence-based intervention programs to combat bullying.
Flinders University research is improving the ways in which communities interact with services in remote and rural areas.

MENTAL HEALTH IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT

There is growing understanding that serious online problems may be indicative of a broader pattern of problem behaviours and/or underlying emotional issues for youth, and vice versa. For example, young people engaging in bullying others online and being victimised online, experience wide ranging social and emotional problems.

Research at Flinders University is dedicated to making a difference to the health and wellbeing of young people’s lives by promoting adaptive online and digital behaviour.

SUBTHEME:

DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH

Lead - Associate Professor Niranjan Bidargaddi
Associate Professor of Personal Health Informatics
College of Medicine and Public Health

Lead - Professor Tarun Bastiampillai
Clinical Academic, College of Medicine and Public Health

In rural and remote Australia, mental health issues are at least as prevalent as they are in metropolitan locations, although limited access to services results in many people not accessing prevention, primary health care and early intervention services.

Flinders University is improving the ways in which communities interact with services in remote and rural areas.

SUBTHEME:

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Lead - Professor Sarah Wendt
Professor in Social Work
College of Education, Psychology and Social Work
with support from

Dr Grace Skrzypiec
Senior Lecturer, College of Education, Psychology and Social Work

Dr Oren Griffiths
Lecturer in Psychology, College of Education, Psychology and Social Work

It’s a disturbing statistic, but half of all mental health conditions in adulthood emerge by age 14, and three quarters by age 24. Research into youth mental health is a global priority.

There is ample evidence that young people involved in harmful bullying have experienced trauma in their own lives, display mental health difficulties and experience psychosocial maladjustment. However, early intervention into trauma events and/or psychotic disorders results in improved outcomes for a typical patient.

Flinders research into youth mental health is broad in scope, including research to improve our understanding of how fundamental changes in neurocognitive processing can lead to early psychotic symptoms. Our researchers are also investigating the features of bullying (i.e. repetition, intended harm and power imbalance) and investigating the development of skills amongst social workers to facilitate positive family change as a way of protecting children from the effects of trauma.

SUBTHEME:

CLINICAL CARE AND PRACTICES

Lead - Professor Eimear Muir-Cochrane
Professor of Nursing, College of Nursing and Health Sciences

How we deliver mental health care is critical to people who suffer mental illness, and can have a significant impact on whether a person will engage willingly with services into the future.

Research led by Professor Eimear Muir-Cochrane focuses on clinical service research involving investigations into the enablers and barriers to providing best practice.

The nature of this work includes applied research into mental health care practices and the involvement of consumers of mental health.

Our partners include London University, the National Mental Health Commission, Office of the Chief Psychiatrist and SA Health.

Professor Tarun Bastiampillai
Clinical Academic
College of Medicine and Public Health

Professor Tarun Bastiampillai has extensive experience in the field of mental health service planning and senior clinical leadership roles. He has provided strategic and policy direction for the delivery of mental health services on a state-wide basis, with a proven capacity to lead fundamental reform and implementation of initiatives for improved performance and clinical outcomes.

Tarun has published in high-impact journals including JAMA, Lancet, JAMA Psychiatry, Lancet Psychiatry and Molecular Psychiatry. He has been an investigator in several digital mental health research projects including the Young and Well CRC and Medical Research Futures Fund projects.

Cutting-edge digital technologies are helping Flinders researchers improve access to services for rural, remote and Indigenous communities.
THEME: 

NEUROSCIENCE AND NEUROCOGNITION

With strong backgrounds in both basic and clinical science, Flinders University neuroscience and neurocognition researchers cover areas including chronic pain, the emerging Microbiome-Gut-Brain axis, central nervous system regulation of homeostasis, and basic human cognition in psychotic illness.

Research includes investigating the mechanisms underlying chronic pain and its associated comorbidities (such as depression and anxiety), how the gut and other visceral organs communicate to the central nervous system via neural pathways linking them to the brain, and the contribution of human-associated microbiota to health and disease. Other projects include the neural correlates of fundamental learning and attention mechanisms using cutting-edge electrophysiological techniques, and using Brain Computer Interface technologies to study neurocognitive processing.

The translation of such research into clinical applications will be an important development in mental health treatments & prevention strategies.

THEME LEAD:

Professor Rainer Haberberger  
Clinical Academic  
Professor and Head of Anatomy and Histology, College of Medicine and Public Health  

Rainer Haberberger is the Head of Department for Anatomy & Histology and the Head of the Pain & Pulmonary Neurobiology Lab within the Flinders Medical Science & Technology cluster of the College of Medicine and Public Health.

He studied Human Biology (Medical Research) at the Philipps-University of Marburg, Germany and was a senior scientist and lecturer at the Institute for Anatomy & Cell Biology, Justus-Liebig University Gießen, Germany.

In 2005 Professor Haberberger was awarded the Mary Overton Neuroscience Fellowship and set up the Pulmonary Neurobiology Lab (now called the Pain & Pulmonary Neurobiology Lab) at Flinders University. Since 2009 he has been an Associate Professor for Neuroscience within the Department of Anatomy & Histology. In 2012 he also took on the role of Convenor of the Centre for Neuroscience and heads the CNS Executive Committee. He was appointed Head of Anatomy & Histology in April 2014.

The research conducted by Stuart and Geraint has important applications in the co-occurrence of physical and mental health problems.
The Órama Institute

Most people are affected by mental health and wellbeing issues at some point in their lives either directly or as family, friends, loved ones, carers and supporters.

The Órama Institute is dedicated to co-designing solutions to benefit end users and those with lived experience and carers.

We are inspired by the strength of those whose lives we seek to improve and the opportunity to create and sustain meaningful change.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: flinders.edu.au/mental-health