

A Members' Requisition General Meeting (MRGM) of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), held virtually (online) on Tuesday 3 May 2022 at 5.00 pm (AEST).

While there was a high volume of questions submitted to the MRGM, the Board's priority has been to progress the next steps to action resolutions. Responses are provided below to Frequently Asked Questions.

1. Why wasn't clinical experience considered and why is there a focus on evidence from clinical trials?

The Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG) development process includes forming a Steering Group of members with relevant expertise to undertake a systematic literature review and evidence assessment to inform the drafting of the CPG.

It is imperative that clinicians are able to draw upon a variety of resources to inform their clinical practice, including clinical experience. The Board encourages Fellows, Trainees, and Affiliates to consider and engage with a variety of sources to inform their clinical practice. While evidence-based care is an essential component of health care quality, other source of information such as clinical experience should also be employed by practitioners in formulating their therapeutic approach in line with best-practice.

2. Is psychodynamic psychotherapy, unlike most other psychotherapies, by its nature not readily amenable to scientific evaluation as required for other medical treatments?

In 2021, the College published [Position Statement 54: Psychotherapy conducted by psychiatrists \(PS54\)](#). PS54 was led by the Faculty of Psychotherapy Committee and highlights that psychotherapy is an evidence-based treatment that is essential to psychiatric practice. The College's Position Statement details evidence supporting the use of psychodynamic psychotherapy for a range of mental disorders, including Mood Disorders. It also identifies the need for continuing research into psychotherapy including on the specific types of psychotherapy in relation to benefits and potential side effects for specific conditions.

3. If changes to the CPG were to lead to changes in Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS) item numbers, or to postgraduate training, would this imply that our College places Fellows' remuneration and doctrine before available knowledge?

The College has a focus on advocacy and is undertaking work on a number of matters including matters relating to the MBS. The College has consistently advocated for the development and refinement of MBS item numbers to better support psychiatrists to provide optimal service to people with mental illness. The College is strongly committed to retention of MBS item numbers that support psychotherapy and does not support further restrictions being put in place.

4. Why was the feedback from College committees not incorporated or dealt with and why was there no response?

In keeping with the established process for the development of CPGs, the Faculty of Psychotherapy Committee was invited to provide feedback on the draft 2020 Mood Disorders CPG in July 2020. There was a total of 43 submissions of feedback from Colleges committees, with three submissions

providing feedback on psychotherapy aspects of the guideline. All feedback was considered by the Mood Disorders Guideline Update Steering Group and the draft guideline revised and responses recorded. The Steering Groups responses and actions were not provided back to those College Committee members that provided feedback.

5. Explain overall process of the MRGM including why members could not 'present their case'.

The College notes that the format of the MRGM reflected that of a General Meeting, as is required by the RANZCP Constitution. Broadly speaking, General Meetings, other than Annual General Meetings, may be held to address matters outside of the scope of the company's daily management, such as changes to organisational name, status or capital structure, the company's constitution, approval of certain director benefits or appointment of auditors, or other key matters raised by members.

Upon receipt of the valid members' requisition on 11 March 2022, the College commenced the process of calling the MRGM in accordance with relevant requirements. The process of calling the MRGM involved the following steps:

- calling the meeting on 7 April 2022
- circulating a Notice of Meeting on 12 April 2022
- circulating the requisitioning member statement on 29 April 2022

The MRGM was held on 3 May 2022. It was held virtually to make it more easily accessible to all members across Australia and New Zealand.

The College invited questions from members prior to the meeting to ensure that these queries could be addressed expediently at the MRGM, and to allow for those who were unable to attend to raise any queries.

As with all general meetings and in accordance with relevant requirements, members with voting rights who were unable to attend the MRGM were encouraged to lodge a proxy. The proxy process was managed by the external provider of the meeting platform and voting technology.

As noted in communications to members prior to the MRGM, the MRGM was a General Meeting as is required by the nature of the meeting and not a debate or discussion forum. The requisitioning members requested that the College circulate a supporting statement, which the College circulated in accordance with relevant legal requirements. This statement provided the requisitioning members with an opportunity to outline their concerns. As is the case with all members, the requisitioning members also had the opportunity to raise questions both prior to and at the MRGM.

6. How were conflicts of interest (COIs) managed throughout the process?

The College upholds the critical importance of the declaration and management of COIs in all College business, including the work of Steering Groups and the development of CPGs. In accordance with usual process, members of the Mood Disorder Guidelines Steering Group were expected to declare and manage, as appropriate, relevant conflicts of interest in accordance with the College's ['Declaring and Managing Conflicts of Interest Guidelines'](#). The Steering Group also maintained a COI register as per the College's established governance requirements.

Notably, the existence of a conflict of interest does not preclude a person's participation in the making of a decision in a committee context. Management of declared conflicts are also required. Together, proper declarations and management of conflicts of interest ensure that the independence of the work is not compromised.

Prior to the draft CPG being submitted to the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry (ANZJP), the Board recognised that the Chair of the Mood Disorders Guideline Update Steering Group was also the Editor of the ANZJP and sought clarification of the management of this COI. The Chair advised the Board that it had been adequately managed and the Chair had removed

themselves from the Editorial process, and the Associate Editor managed the ANZJP process. The Board is not aware of any information indicating that COIs were inappropriately dealt with in the context of the Mood Disorder Clinical Practice Guideline Update Steering Group.

7. How will the content of the concerns raised by the Faculty of Psychotherapy & requisitioning members be addressed?

The Board has established a new Steering Group, referred to as the 'Mood Disorders – Review of Evidence for Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Steering Group', to oversee a review of the evidence base regarding psychodynamic psychotherapies in the assessment and treatment of mood disorders. The Steering Group has been formed and the membership was discussed with the Faculty of Psychotherapy Chair, Mood Disorders Guideline Update Steering Group Chair, requisitioning members, and other key stakeholders. The Steering Group may make recommendations for the Board to consider.

8. Is there a place for the College structuring a study regarding treatment of mood disorders designed by both biologically and psychodynamically subspecialties within the College in an attempt to acknowledge the validity of both?

The College supports research as a vehicle to establish and build an evidence-base for policy and practice. The College does not directly undertake clinical research, but has established an Advancing the profile of Clinical Academic Psychiatry Steering Group in 2022 to support and advocate for research in psychiatry. The College supports research organisations seeking to investigate the treatment of mood disorders and funding for research is also available through the College Foundation.

9. The 2015 Guidelines were written from the perspective of a treating clinician in his or her consulting room. The 2020 Guidelines have a different emphasis. Why has there been a shift to focus on evidence-based practice.

The Mood Disorders Clinical Practice Guideline Update Steering Group assessed and agreed on an approach to the development of the 2020 Mood Disorders CPG that elevated the use of evidence-based practice. This shift was made to be in line with contemporary approaches to CPGs. The Steering Group Terms of Reference are available on the College website [here](#).

10. Could the College state the cost; who the external expert is; details of their training and expertise in the psychotherapies and psychotherapy research; and also explain why the Faculty of Psychotherapy was not asked instead to perform the evaluation, which it would have performed for no cost?

The new Steering Group, referred to as the 'Mood Disorders Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Evidence Review Steering Group', has identified a suitable external, independent consultant to undertake the review of evidence through a formal 'Request for Quote' process. Further information regarding this Group can be found [here](#).

There is a separate project that will look to review the *process* of the development of all future CPGs. This project is referred to as the 'Future Development of Clinical Practice Guidelines' and a Steering Group has been formed. This project is unrelated to the Mood Disorders CPGs. A consultant has been engaged for this project. The relevant expertise of the consultant engaged is established background in evidence review and guideline development processes.

11. Given that the 2022 NICE guidelines rank short term psychodynamic psychotherapy for mild depression 11th out of 11 potential treatments (below counselling), and for

moderate/severe depression 7th out of 10 potential treatments, isn't it time that the College publishes a cost-effectiveness analysis of treatments for major depression in Australia and New Zealand?

The [2022 NICE guidelines](#) were published on 29 June 2022. In line with usual College governance process, the College is considering the publication at Committee meetings and the guidelines will be reviewed accordingly.

Committees, including the Faculty of Psychotherapy, are able to commission a cost-effectiveness analysis of treatments and this may be considered as part of a Committees work plan and priorities.

12. The Requisitioning Members have been given 1000 words to explain their position while the College Fellows conducting the meeting wrote numerous pages explaining the process of the CPG?

A MRGM is an official General Meeting of the members of the RANZCP, which is called by the RANZCP Board following a valid request ('requisition') from Fellows. This is a process guided by legal requirements, which amongst other things, include requirements for the requisitioning members' supporting statement, and the College has managed the process in accordance with those requirements, as set out in the RANZCP Constitution and relevant laws. The requisitioning members were encouraged by the College to seek their own legal advice in relation to the General Meeting requirements as appropriate.

As is appropriate for a MRGM, the Board was responsible for conducting the MRGM and to ensure transparency with the membership, provided the presentation which included contextual and factual information which provided background to the issues relevant to the resolutions put by the requisitioning members. The presentation was circulated to all members, including requisitioning members prior to the meeting.

The MRGM process has been carefully conducted in accordance with standard procedures, and the College does not agree with the implication that some Fellows have been elevated or advantaged above others during this process.