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Health informatics is crucial to reducing costs for mental health

A report issued last month by Medibank has estimated the overall cost of supporting people with mental illness in Australia at $28.6 billion per year.

The report found that our current mental healthcare system is fragmented and uncoordinated, making it impossible for most consumers to receive satisfactory care.

In order to achieve successful reform to address these issues, proper foundations need to be laid.

Health informatics trained workers are necessary at every stage of any health system reform to ensure successful implementation.

Health informaticians are vital to system design and implementation to make sure new systems or system improvements integrate rather than further fragmenting the system.

Among the report recommendations is expansion of community care and online Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for those suffering mild forms of mental illness.

Evidence from Australia is growing to suggest online CBT increases rates of treatment and quality of life for people suffering from mild forms of depression and anxiety.

The report contends that Australia is in a position to reform our system using existing technologies such as online CBT to create an 'end-to-end' mental health service.

HISA's Health Informatics Conference 2013 has devoted a full day of proceedings to the journey through the healthcare system of mental health patients.

Presentations will showcase the latest research and technology, and demonstrate the measureable benefits e-health can bring when used properly.

The content of the presentations will be of vital interest to anyone concerned with the issues described in the Medibank report.

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