

New program puts the brakes on depression roundabout

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A [University of Queensland](#) researcher is offering people with depression a new, free program that is confidential and accessible to people across Australia, including those in remote areas.

"The year-long program is for adults who are not depressed at the moment, but who have had repeated bouts of depression," said UQ psychologist Professor David Kavanagh, who is working with researchers from the Universities of Wollongong and Canberra.

"People who volunteer for the program, called 'On Track', receive a series of letters or emails with advice on how to stay well.

"The letters help them stay in control by creating individualised plans.

"They send back information on what they have tried, and how they are feeling.

"We will give them feedback on their progress, and access to a toll-free telephone line for additional assistance. We also keep their doctors informed.

"This program avoids the need for face-to-face appointments that can be expensive and time-consuming – especially if you live outside a city or regional centre," Professor Kavanagh said.

"The program is based on a model that we have shown is successful in helping people take control of alcohol problems," Professor Kavanagh said.

"Volunteers will help us determine how well this program can help people with a history of depression - a serious illness that strikes more than one in six Australians at least once.

"About half of the people who experience depression have a period of recovery over the next year. Unfortunately, many of these people have more episodes.

"The more episodes they have, the more likely it is to return. It is also more likely if they stop taking medication too soon, or they still have some symptoms.

"People with depression are also more likely to smoke, be less active, and have an unhealthy diet. They are more likely to develop serious physical illnesses, and tend to die earlier.

"It doesn't have to be like this. The truth is that people with depression have a great deal to offer, and the start of the year is an ideal time to get off the depression roundabout and get back on track," Professor Kavanagh said.

People who want to take part in the program can call 1300 300 164 at any time and leave a message.

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