20 March 2018

Focus on the physical health of people living with a mental illness

The health and wellbeing gap between people with and without a mental illness will be the focus of a forum to be held this week.

The South Western Sydney Wellbeing Collaboration’s Physical Health and Mental Wellbeing Forum will address the 20-year life expectancy gap and look at ways cancer, heart and lung diseases can be prevented.

“This health inequality needs to change,” Gabi Martinez, Senior Health Promotion Officer at South Western Sydney Local Health District said.

“The forum is a call to action. It will bring together consumers, carers, health professionals and organisations to focus attention on the urgent need to improve the physical health of people living with a mental illness.

“It will also highlight new and innovative programs which are making a difference.”

Liverpool Mayor Wendy Waller and NSW Mental Health Commissioner Catherine Lourey will speak, along with the Cancer Council, which will speak about programs aimed at reducing the high rate of smoking among people with a mental illness.

Philip Ward, the District’s Director of Schizophrenia Research Unit, will also speak about his experience in incorporating physical health in mental health care settings.

He has found improving the physical health of people living with a mental illness can be a critical factor in improving the symptoms and management of mental illness.

The forum will also link people with existing support services and there will be interactive stalls where health professionals, carers and consumers can speak with local service providers about practical steps to improve physical health.

The forum is free of charge and will be held at Whitlam Leisure Centre, Liverpool from 9am – 2pm on Thursday, 22 March.

For more information, contact Henry Lim at Henry.Lim@health.nsw.gov.au or to register visit https://physicalhealthandmentalwellbeingforum.eventbrite.com.au.