

Colorado's Man Therapy goes 'down under' to Australia

Written by Holyoke Enterprise
Wednesday, 26 June 2013 10:51 -

Man Therapy, a successful online campaign developed in Colorado to improve men's mental health, launched June 5 in Australia. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's Office of Suicide Prevention, the Carson J. Spencer Foundation and the Cactus advertising agency launched Man Therapy in Colorado in July 2012 to overcome the stigma men associate with mental health treatment.

The Australian version follows the approach of the Colorado campaign, substituting Dr. Brian Ironwood for Dr. Rich Mahogany and Australian cultural references for American, but continuing the man's man, no-nonsense, tongue-in-cheek approach to getting men to talk about their feelings and get treatment.

"Suicide rates are too high in Colorado, and men carry much of the burden," said Dr. Chris Urbina, executive director and chief medical officer of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. "Man Therapy has proven to be a successful approach to men's mental health that deals with depression and suicide head-on. We're proud to share our success and lessons learned with our Australian partners as they try to deal with some of the same issues down under."

Mantherapy.org is the centerpiece of the campaign. Colorado men who visit find they have a virtual appointment with Mahogany, a man's man dedicated to cutting through the stigma of mental health with his rapier wit, no-nonsense approach and practical advice for men. His office is open year-round at any hour, and he often sees five men at a time.

Visitors navigate through Mahogany's virtual office, finding useful information, taking an 18-point "head inspection" and receiving a list of possible therapies.

The site has generated 572 unique visitors a day since its inception, for a total of 212,000. A total of 29,000 people have taken the self-assessment, and 90 percent of them reported they are very likely or likely to take the advice and recommendations prescribed after their exam.

The Australian Department of Health and Aging and men's mental health organization beyondblue studied the effectiveness of Man Therapy, found evidence to support licensing the

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campaign and began a multi-million-dollar media campaign to introduce www.mantherapy.org.au/ and Ironwood to Australians.

“Dr. Brian Ironwood is a quintessential Aussie bloke, except he understands the importance of good mental health,” said Kate Carnell, chief executive officer of beyondblue. “We hope Man Therapy will help us make depression more understandable and less embarrassing in Australia, so men will talk about how they feel and get help if they need it.”

Holyoke Enterprise June 27, 2013