

EMOTIONAL
HEALTH CLINIC

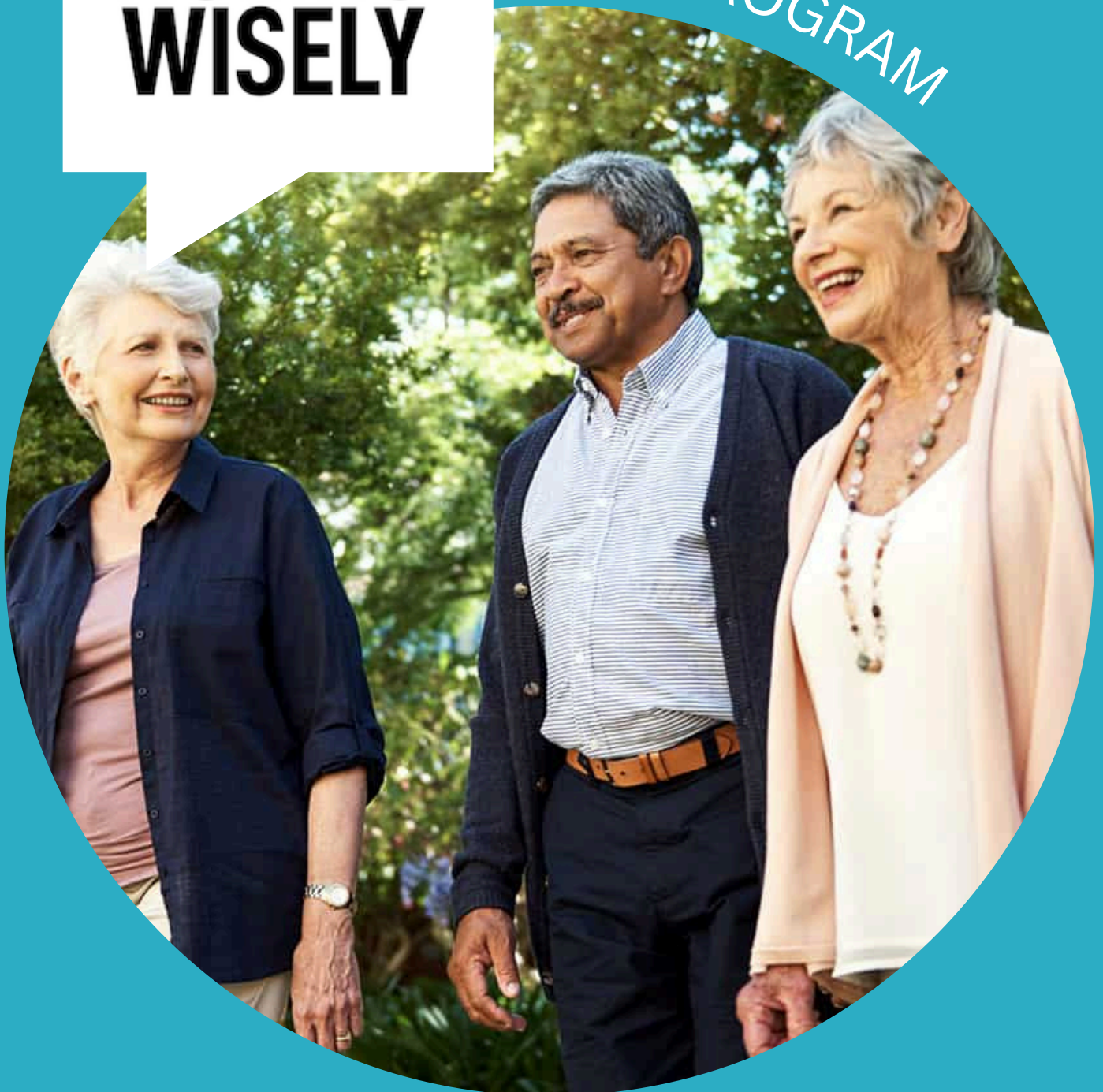
*Lifespan Health and
Wellbeing Research Centre*



MACQUARIE
University

AGEING WISELY

THE PROGRAM



Ageing Wisely

THE PROGRAM

The Ageing Wisely program was developed by Professor Viviana Wuthrich in 2009 in the Lifespan Health & Wellbeing Research Centre, Macquarie University. It was specifically designed to help older adults (aged 60 years and older) learn skills to manage worry, anxiety, low mood and depression.

The Ageing Wisely program was the first cognitive behavioural therapy program to target co-occurring anxiety and depression in older adults in the world. This program has been formally evaluated in numerous clinical trials and has been shown to be highly effective. Clinical trials show that 63-75% of people are remitted from anxiety and mood disorders by the end of treatment, with almost 70% of people still in recovery 3 months after completing the treatment.

Our findings show these benefits are maintained for at least 10 years after completing treatment. People completing this program have also reported improvements in their quality of life and social relationships.

The program is available through our Emotional Health Clinic at Macquarie University via face-to-face, telehealth or online.

HOW IS IT DELIVERED?

The program has undergone further development and evaluation to develop a suite of programs to meet different delivery formats. Ageing Wisely is delivered by a trained therapist in a group therapy or individual format. It can also be delivered via an online program and via a self-help workbook with brief telephone support from a trained therapist. From early 2025, clinicians can be trained to administer the program through our eTraining course.

WHAT TOPICS ARE COVERED IN THE PROGRAM?

Psychological skills are taught to address the following topics:

- understanding low mood and anxiety
- increasing activity levels
- dealing with low motivation
- challenging unhelpful thinking
- facing fears and dealing with avoidance
- strategies to communicate more assertively and build social connections
- sleep strategies and relaxation



Research

RESEARCH EVIDENCE

The program's efficacy has been shown in clinical trials.

It has been adapted to be suitable for people with Parkinson's disease, to additionally treat lifestyle risks for dementia (Happy Healthy Ageing Program), to address loneliness and social isolation alongside depression and anxiety, and adapted for stepped-care approaches (self-help, low intensity, internet versions) currently applied by allied health practitioners in Older Adult Mental Health Services.

RESEARCH IMPACT

Ageing Wisely is the first evidence-based cognitive behavioural therapy program developed to treat depression and anxiety in older adults. Research on components of this intervention has led to a paradigm shift to show older adults can benefit from cognitive therapy despite age related reductions in cognitive flexibility.

This program forms the basis for resources freely distributed by Beyond Blue, Dementia Australia, and the Australian Psychological Society to assist consumers and professionals recognise symptoms of depression and anxiety in older adults.

The research on the Ageing Wisely program has influenced psychology registrar training.

This program is currently being used in Older Adult Mental Health Services in NSW, nationally and internationally.

It is also the basis for a current project trialling a screening and risk reduction model for the development of dementia and poor wellbeing in adults >60 years in the Sydney North Primary Health Network, and testing of a modular approach for the treatment of depression and anxiety in older adults in inpatient mental health units.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR RESEARCH

To learn more about our research, please visit our webpage: mq.edu.au/ageing-wisely



Publications

1. Wuthrich, V.M., & Rapee, R.M. (2013). Randomized Controlled Trial of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Comorbid Anxiety and Depression in Older Adults. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 51 (12), 779-786. doi: 10.1016/j.brat.2013.09.002
2. Johnco, C., Wuthrich, V.M., Rapee, R.M. (2014). The influence of cognitive flexibility on treatment outcome and cognitive restructuring skill acquisition during cognitive behavioural treatment for anxiety and depression in older adults: Results of a pilot study. *Behaviour, Research and Therapy*, 57, 55-64. doi: 10.1016/j.brat.2014.04.005
3. Wuthrich, V.M., Rapee, R.M., Kangas, M., & Perini, S. (2016). Randomised Controlled Trial of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Compared to a Discussion Group for Comorbid Anxiety and Depression in Older Adults. *Psychological Medicine*, 46 (4), 785-795. doi:10.1017/S0033291715002251
4. Wuthrich, V.M., & Rapee, R.M. (2019). Telephone delivered Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for treating anxiety and depression in Parkinson's disease: A Pilot Study. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 42 (4), 444-453. DOI: 10.1080/07317115.2019.1580811
5. Wuthrich, V.M., Rapee, R.M., Draper, B., Brodaty, H., Low, L-F., & Naismith, S. (2019). Reducing Risk Factors for Cognitive Decline Through Psychological Interventions: A Pilot Randomised Controlled Trial, *International Psychogeriatrics*, 31, (7), 1015-1025. doi:10.1017/S1041610218001485
6. Johnco, C. J., Chen, J. T. H., Muir, C., Strutt, P., Dawes, P., Siette, J., Dias, C. B., Hillebrandt, H., Maurice, O., & Wuthrich, V. M. (2021). Long-term relapse rates after cognitive behaviour therapy for anxiety and depressive disorders among older adults: a follow-up study during COVID-19. *Australasian Journal on Ageing*, 40 (2), 208-212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajag.12928>
7. Smith, R., Wuthrich, V.M., Johnco, C., & Belcher, J. (2021). Effect of Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy on Loneliness in a Community Sample of Older Adults: A Secondary Analysis of a Randomised Controlled Trial. *Clinical Gerontologist*, 44:4, 439-449, DOI: 10.1080/07317115.2020.1836105.

