



DEBBIE GAUNT FOUNDATION

Information
Package

Introduction

The Debbie Gaunt Foundation was created to build awareness about perimenopause, an often-challenging life event that can have devastating impacts on a woman's physical and mental health.

Perimenopause is a transition that women are expected to manage independently and in private – perhaps one reason it is poorly understood in the community. Medical research into complications of perimenopause is also surprisingly scant.

Founder Craig Gaunt became aware of this knowledge gap after losing his wife Debbie to suicide in 2019. A much-loved wife, mother, friend and colleague, Debbie became severely mentally unwell shortly before her death, an episode that has since been partially attributed to the hormonal effects of perimenopause.

As they farewelled Debbie, the Gaunt family made a promise.

On behalf of:

Every life that has been lost

Every family that has been torn apart

Every woman who has suffered thinking it's her fault

Every child who's watched their mother change into a different person

If this sickness or disease is listening, if you can hear us – you've picked the wrong person. Because we are coming to get you.

To honour Debbie, the Gaunt family works to fund projects that aim to illuminate and better understand the mental health impacts of perimenopause.

Milestones



Debbie Gaunt Foundation launched on World Mental Health Day 10th October 2020. This marked the beginning of our Grand Plan. An initial \$20,000 was donated to Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre by the Gaunt family.



First major fundraising event - a Charity Golf Day at Breakers Country Club held on 14th May 2021. This event aimed to raise awareness about perimenopause.



A further \$24,500 raised through donations and fundraising gifted to Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre in June 2021, bringing total donation amount to \$44,500.



Women's Mental Health Short Course midlife module for the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University is finalised and available to study online from June 2021.

What has been achieved so far

Our partnership with MAPrc

There is a general lack of knowledge and understanding about perimenopause within the community. MAPrc were working on an online course to help educate medical professionals about women's mental health, but had limited funding.

We wanted to assist and have donated a total of \$44,500 to allow them to complete the Midlife module which includes the topics of perimenopausal depression, menopause and hormone replacement therapy, complex trauma disorder in perimenopause and family violence. The content draws on the latest in psychoneuroendocrine research including the extraordinary work of the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre's Women's Mental Health Division. The Women's Mental Health short course is now up and running online (as seen below).



Women's Mental Health Short Course - Midlife Module 2021
11% COMPLETE

MIDLIFE MODULE OVERVIEW

- Debbie Gaunt Foundation
- Intended Learning Outcomes - Midlife Module
- Midlife Module - What will I be learning?

PART 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO MIDLIFE

- An Introduction to Midlife
- Defining Perimenopause
- Symptoms of the Perimenopause
- Assessment in the Midlife

LESSON 1 OF 47
Debbie Gaunt Foundation

This module is dedicated to Debbie Gaunt

We are extremely grateful to the **Debbie Gaunt Foundation** for their generous support of the development of the women's mental health short course - midlife module.

We dedicate this module to the memory of **Debbie Gaunt** and all women who have lost their lives to mental illness.

We hope this module and its teachings will play a small part in reducing the burden of mental ill health not just on the sufferer, but on their families and loved ones who are also profoundly impacted.



We are proud to be friends with the Debbie Gaunt Foundation who are raising funds to support our short course in Women's Mental Health, that will provide much needed training, skills and knowledge about treating women with mental ill health. Please support this wonderful foundation and Help Mend Minds.

- Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre



Debbie Gaunt Foundation

What has been achieved so far

Charity Golf Day

The inaugural Debbie Gaunt Foundation Charity Golf Day was held on Friday 14th May 2021. It aimed to raise awareness and funds for perimenopause.

The day consisted of golf, lunch and prizes. There were also multiple auction items and raffles which had been kindly donated to us by a range of businesses and individuals.

The day was a great success and raised a total of \$11,063.95 for the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre.

We would like to thank Breakers Country Club and Breakers Ladies Golf Club for helping us organise this event.

We aim to continue to host fundraising events like this annually, partnering with multiple golf clubs on the Central Coast to celebrate women in golf, whilst also raising awareness for our foundation.



Donation to MAPrc

Dear Mr Gaunt,

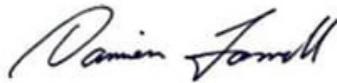
Thank you for your Foundation's generous donation to support the Women's Mental Health - Short Course in the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences at Monash University.

Your generosity helps us to maintain and develop activities for the benefit of students and the broader community with improved student access and support initiatives, enhanced teaching and learning programs, upgrades to campus facilities and innovative world-class research.

If you have any queries in relation to your gift, please contact the Donor Relations team on (03) 9903 1608 or email donor.relations@monash.edu

Thank you again for your support. A receipt for your gift is provided below.

Yours sincerely,



Damien Farrell
Vice-President (Advancement)



ABN 12 377 614 012

Donation Receipt: 
Date Received: 10/06/2021
Received From: Debbie Gaunt Foundation

Gift Designation	Gift Reference	Amount
Women's Mental Health - Short Course		AUD\$24,500.00

Gifts to Monash University of \$2 or more are allowable deductions for income tax purposes within Australia.

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A total of \$44,500 has now been donated. This includes an initial funding of \$20,000 by the Gaunt family, plus a further commitment of \$24,500 raised through fundraisers and donations.

Next Steps on our Grand Plan

Our first goal of the funding the MAPrc Midlife Module has now been accomplished and will help equip medical professionals with the knowledge to recognise symptoms and help women experiencing perimenopause. We will now shift focus to achieving the remaining aspects of our Grand Plan.

Debbie Gaunt Foundation Founder Craig initially reached out to professor Jayashri Kulkarni, author of the research articles he had been reading on perimenopause, who is also the Director of the Monash Alfred Psychiatric Research Centre in Melbourne.

The Gaunt family travelled to Melbourne to meet with them and view the The Women's Specialist Health Clinic at The Alfred. This is the only clinic in Australia dedicated to menopause treatment, and is the only type in the world doing what they do.

Currently, more than 300 Australian women are on the waiting list to see a specialist at the clinic. This is simply too many.

Our Grand Plan, in collaboration with MAPrc, is to have these clinics all over Australia, so no woman will have to wait to get help.



Jack, Craig and Hayley Gaunt

About Perimenopause

Perimenopause is a transitional time during which a woman's body prepares for the end of their reproductive years. It typically occurs in midlife, though some women notice changes as early as their 30s.

Common indicators of perimenopause include:

- fluctuating levels of estrogen (the main female hormone)
- irregular menstrual periods and decreased fertility
- hot flashes, night sweats, fatigue and sleep disturbance
- development of mood swings, irritability or depression
- changes in sexual function

A woman who has not menstruated for 12 consecutive months is said to have reached menopause.

Mental health disorders can have devastating impacts on women as they approach menopause. This phase of a woman's life, typically between 42 and 54 years of age, is known as the 'perimenopause' and mental illness is very prevalent, in women at this stage. The risk of serious depression is significantly increased in perimenopausal women. The adverse impact also affects her family and society.

Research specifically targeting the mental health of perimenopausal women is lacking. There is a gap in the recognition and provision of appropriate treatments for middle-aged women experiencing depression related to the hormonal changes of the menopause. Perimenopausal depression may present with symptoms that differ from those of typical depression.

16X

Depression is 16X more common in perimenopausal women than any other group of Australians

42-54

years

Typical Perimenopause age range

About Perimenopausal Depression

It is important to recognise the unique symptoms of perimenopausal depression, as well as the serious nature of this depression. The process of menopause can take many years, during which the patient's quality of life and that of her family, may deteriorate irreparably.

Symptoms of perimenopausal depression

- Low energy
- Paranoid thinking Irritability or hostility
- Decreased self-esteem
- Isolation
- Anxiety
- Somatic symptoms
- Sleep disturbance
- Weight gain
- Decreased sexual interest
- Problems with memory and concentration

Perimenopausal depression is increasingly recognised as being distinctly different from major depression. Major depression is typically characterised by episodes of prolonged sadness with associated sleep and appetite changes. In contrast, perimenopausal depression is characterised by irritability, low but fluctuating mood, and often occurs in conjunction with typical menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes. For some, perimenopausal depression is a serious condition that requires early recognition. Our grand plan of specialist clinics all around Australia would enable earlier and appropriate intervention.

The course of mental illness in women differs from that of men and is greatly influenced by biological, psychological and social changes over the life cycle. However, most treatments for mental illnesses have been developed and trialled in the 'typical' male patient which may not be the optimal treatment for women with mental ill health related to the menopause.

About Perimenopause and Suicide Risk

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the highest rate of suicide amongst women in 2018 was the 40-44 age group, followed by the 50-54 age range.

The hormonal shifts of perimenopause should be considered among the risk factors for suicide amongst middle-aged women, alongside social factors such as divorce and relationship breakdown, impending retirement, financial instability and family responsibilities. Perimenopause can exacerbate the symptoms of existing mood disorders such as anxiety and depression or cause previous illness to recur. Perimenopausal depression can also affect women with no history of poor mental health.

Similar to in pregnancy and following childbirth, the enormous hormonal shifts experienced during perimenopause can trigger psychosis in some women.

Where to get help

Though research specifically addressing the mental-health effects of perimenopause is limited, comprehensive general information and support can be found at sites including:

<https://www.sane.org/>

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>

If you are concerned about how perimenopause is impacting you or someone you love, consulting your general practitioner is an important step toward finding appropriate support. You can also find doctors registered to [Australasian Menopause Society here](#).

For crisis counselling 24/7, call Lifeline on [13 11 14](#).

In a life-threatening emergency, contact [000](#).

Links to further research and information

[Perimenopausal depression – an under-recognised entity](#)

[Beware suicide link to perimenopausal depression](#)

[Women's Mental Health Short Course Video](#)

[Women and Mental Health position paper 2012](#)

[Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre](#)

[Viv Health](#) for telehealth appointments with menopause experts

Debbie Gaunt Foundation is willing to partner with medical professionals, community organisations and other stakeholders to improve understanding and effective management of perimenopause and its disruptive effects.

Debbie Gaunt Foundation putting perimenopause in the spotlight

A new women's health charity created by a Shelly Beach family is helping a whole generation of women find understanding, confidence and comfort as they undergo the change before the change.

The Debbie Gaunt Foundation was launched to build awareness about perimenopause, an often-challenging life event that can have devastating impacts on a woman's physical and mental health.

The transitional period before a woman's final menstrual period (menopause), perimenopause most commonly occurs in women in their mid-



Debbie Gaunt

40s and signifies the ovaries winding down.

Lasting anywhere between one to ten years, women going through perimenopause often

experience the same or even more intense symptoms of menopause.

Irregular periods, hot flushes and exhaustion are as common among perimenopausal women as they are during menopause, as are mood swings, anxiety and depression.

But unlike menopause, perimenopausal women often manage their condition independently and in private.

Medical research into health problems and complications linked to perimenopause is also surprisingly scant, something Foundation Founder, Craig Gaunt, became painfully aware of after losing his wife Debbie to suicide in 2019.

A wife, mother, friend and colleague, Debbie became severely mentally unwell shortly before her death, an episode that has since been partially attributed to the hormonal effects of perimenopause.

Vowing to honour Debbie's memory to help other women and their families experiencing perimenopause, through the Debbie Gaunt Foundation, the Gaunt family now works tirelessly to raise awareness and understanding of perimenopause as well as funds for Australian led studies and projects that explore the mental health impacts of the condition.

Improving general awareness of perimenopause is also high atop the Foundation's to do list.

"Debbie's perimenopause was very retrospective for my family.

"We had never even heard of it before and sadly that's the case for most people, even women, so they just suffer throughout it all.

"That's why we made a promise to do something about it," Craig said.

The Foundation's first major project has been to fund the development of a women's midlife mental health module for doctors to be delivered by Melbourne's Monash Alfred Research Centre, the only specialised clinic in the country dedicated to helping women experiencing perimenopause.

The module will address perimenopausal depression, menopause and hormone replacement therapy, complex trauma disorder in perimenopause and family violence.

So far, the Foundation has donated \$20,000 for the project and has committed to raising an additional \$24,500 for it throughout 2021.

According to Craig, the Foundation's long term goal is to help fund the opening of more specialist clinics like Monash Alfred around the country, including one here on the Coast.

Dillon Luke

We thank you for your support.



Contact Us

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The Debbie Gaunt Foundation is auspiced by Iris Foundation, and supports its efforts to reduce the risk of suicide on the NSW Central Coast.
www.irisfoundation.org.au E: enquiries@irisfoundation.org.au



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