

The DIPEX Charity, PO Box 428, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 9EU
Tel: 01865 744209 Fax: 01865 289287 email: info@dipex.org.uk

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

13th October 2009

**Launch of 'Young People, depression and low mood'
a new section on www.youthhealthtalk.org**

Jon Snow, patron of DIPEX, today chaired the launch of a new section of the award-winning website **Youthhealthtalk** on young people's experiences of depression and low mood. Speakers included Sir Liam Donaldson, Chief Medical Officer; Professor Alan Stein, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Oxford; and the author Philip Pullman. The research was led by the DIPEX Health Experiences Research Group, University of Oxford and is based on in-depth interviews with 39 young people aged 16-27.

"My 2007 annual report said that promoting emotional wellbeing and mental health underpins all aspects of teenage health." said Sir Liam Donaldson, CMO, in his opening remarks. "I am delighted that Youthhealthtalk is providing young people, their carers and health professionals with the information and support they need."

Key findings of the research are:

FEELING DIFFERENT & LACKING IN CONFIDENCE – *Many young people described always having felt somehow different to others since they were little. Few of them realised that their experiences including in some cases a tendency to self-harm were mental health problems until much later. The majority also reported lacking in self esteem and confidence, which often also prevented them from getting help, or feeling like they were "worthy" of help.*

NO BLAME – *A key to young people being able to tackle their mental health problems and to getting better was the realisation that they were not to blame; it wasn't "their fault". For some, the roots of their problems were in difficult childhood or home lives, others recognised that their depression as an organic illness that needed to be medically treated. For many it was important to acknowledge and accept that there is sometimes no actual cause for depression.*

GETTING INVOLVED – *Young people want to be involved in their own care, to be included in the decision-making process over their treatment choices. Many felt that crucial to their recovery was becoming and being allowed to be involved in this way. Being supported towards becoming active in dealing with depression was essential.*

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DIPEX is a registered charity No: 1087019 and company limited by guarantee No. 4178865
Registered office: 41 Cornmarket Street, Oxford OX1 3HA
Co-Founders: Dr Ann McPherson CBE and Dr Andrew Herxheimer
Trustees: Lord Stone of Blackheath (Chair), Lord Turnberg, Catherine Dilnot,
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MUTUAL RESPECT – *Young people want to be treated with respect by their health professionals. They disliked being patronised or being talked at and responded best when their lives and situations were viewed as a whole. They appreciated straightforward, genuine and caring communication from health care professionals.*

At today's launch, Professor Stein said: "Depression is experienced by many young people but is often suffered alone and in silence. This excellent balanced and sympathetic website will help young people to have the problem recognised and understood, and at the same time give them hope." Philip Pullman added: "Young minds are wonderfully strong and agile, but they are malleable too, and when something like depression strikes, the young patient can suffer a great deal. Thank goodness for Youthhealthtalk, which lets young people know that they are not alone in their experience, and provides what might easily turn out to be a lifeline."

The new section of Youthhealthtalk includes summaries of what young people said on a number of topics, including their experiences of, for example, bullying and feeling different, early signs and symptoms, antidepressants, talking treatments and other interventions, friendships and family, school and lifestyle.

"I always knew that I was different . I just felt like I was always grasping to feel I was fitting in." Beth 21

"I guess I learnt to accept that I had a real medical condition, that it wasn't just me being stupid and me feeling down or being a wuss." Dan 22

"I hate the fact that mental health is so misunderstood. I also hate the fact that young people generally are perceived as misbehaving, attention seeking control freaks, who are just rude to their parents and don't want to work hard enough. I don't think it's fair to tar everyone with the same brush." Erika-Maye 17

Ulla Raisanen, Senior Researcher, who headed up the project, said: "One in ten young people in the UK experiences depression, persistent low mood or anxiety. Many find it hard to talk about these experiences to their parents, friends, teachers or health professionals. While it is not possible to just "snap out of" depression, people can get through it with the right help and support."

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The project has been funded by Comic Relief to whom we express our sincere thanks. The new website section, which includes 350 video, audio and written clips, can be found at: www.youthhealthtalk.org/young_people_depression_and_low_mood.

About DIPEX/Healthtalkonline/Youthhealthtalk

DIPEX has created two websites – www.healthtalkonline.org and www.youthhealthtalk.org – of people's experiences of almost 50 different illnesses and health conditions. The websites are aimed patients, their carers, family and friends, doctors, nurses and other health professionals and are based on in-depth qualitative research carried out by the DIPEX Health Experiences Research Group at the University of Oxford.

Users of our websites will find accounts – presented through video, audio and written material – which resonate with their own perspectives and experiences of issues such as reaction to diagnosis, consultation with their doctor, effect on work, social life and relationships, decisions on treatment options and side-effects. The questions that patients want answered are identified in their interviews and summarised on our websites.

To date, we have covered illnesses including cancer, heart disease, neurological conditions (Parkinson's, epilepsy and autism) chronic health issues (HIV, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis) and mental health. We also provide experiences of women's health (pregnancy, breastfeeding, antenatal screening) and publish young people's experiences (including epilepsy, sexual health, teenage cancer) on our dedicated website – youthhealthtalk.org.

Our supporters include Jon Snow, Dawn French, John Humphrys, Ian McEwan, Dr Jonathan Miller, Jenni Murray, Michael Palin, Philip Pullman, Libby Purves, Claire Rayner, Thom Yorke and many others. DIPEX, a registered charity no. 1087019, is funded by the Department of Health and charitable trusts. Full details are on our websites.

For more information contact:

Graham Shaw, Chief Executive
Phone: 07799 664371

Email: graham.shaw99@btinternet.com

Francie Smee

Phone: 01865 289328

Email: dipexadmin@dphpc.ox.ac.uk

DIPEX Charity
PO Box 428
Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 9EU
Phone: 01865 744209
Fax: 01865 289287
Email: info@dipex.org.uk

DIPEX Research Group
Department of Primary Care
University of Oxford
Old Rd, Headington
Oxford OX3 7LF
Email: dipexadmin@dphpc.ox.ac.uk

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