

Professor Jayashri Kulkarni, MBBS MPM FRANZCP PhD

DIRECTOR, MONASH ALFRED PSYCHIATRY RESEARCH CENTRE (MAPrc)

Jayashri KULKARNI commenced her appointment as Professor of Psychiatry, The Alfred and Monash University in 2002. She founded and directs a large psychiatric research group, the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre (MAPrc), which expanded from 25 staff in 2002 to 170 staff and students in 2014, and covers 5 different research streams, with a total of 112 projects. The aim of the research centre, encapsulated in its catchphrase “We Mend Minds”, is to develop new treatments, new understanding and new service deliveries for people with mental illness. MAPrc is a clinical psychiatry research centre that translates cutting edge neuroscience discoveries into innovative treatments for severe mental illnesses.

Jayashri Kulkarni graduated from Monash Medical School, Melbourne Australia in 1981, worked in emergency medicine and then decided to become a psychiatrist. She became a Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists in 1989 and was awarded a PhD from Monash University in 1997 for her thesis “Women and Psychosis”. A major area of her research involves psychoneuroendocrine studies of the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis in women with severe mental illnesses. In particular, she has pioneered the use of estrogen as a new treatment in schizophrenia. Professor Kulkarni has been invited to deliver keynote addresses at many international meetings and conferences, and collaborates extensively with researchers nationally and throughout the world.

Women’s Mental Health is the major area of Jayashri’s research and she successfully ran the 3rd International Congress on Women’s Mental Health held in Melbourne in March 2008. She has worked in this area for 25 years to improve the quality of care for women with mental illnesses by developing specific treatments that are tailored to suit women’s needs biologically, socially and psychologically.

Jayashri has won many prestigious awards for her research work and chairs many advisory boards for both industry and government. She directed the Monash University Undergraduate Medical student teaching program in mental health and the Masters Degree in Psychological Medicine. Jayashri has recently also been appointed as Director of Research for the School of Psychology, Psychiatry and Psychological Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Science, Monash University.

As a psychiatrist, Jayashri has extensive clinical experience in many broad areas of practice. She trained in consultation – liaison psychiatry, then became the Deputy Director of the Early Psychosis Centre, Melbourne, the Director of Dandenong psychiatry service and more recently runs a women’s mental health and tertiary referral clinic at the Alfred Hospital and Victoria Clinic. Over the years, she has supervised many psychiatry registrars, medical students and postgraduate students in various mental health disciplines.

A great deal of her work involves raising funds for psychiatry research and Jayashri has an excellent track record of obtaining government grants, industry contracts and philanthropic endowments. She has a wide network of support in the business, academic and, political sectors. Professor Kulkarni is a foundation member of the “Club Melbourne” initiative, which involves many Governmental Departments in the pursuit of academic conferences and activities for the city of Melbourne. Importantly, Jayashri also has a great deal of support in the mental health community of consumer and carer organisations.

Professor Kulkarni is a well-known public speaker and has a great deal of experience with the media. She has been a regular presenter on ABC radio and has contributed to many other talkback radio programs as well as appearing on television programs such as the “Insight “ series on SBS, and ABC 7.30 report. She also has written opinion pieces for “The Age” newspaper on several occasions. Professor Kulkarni and Dr Brian Lithgow won the 2010 Grand Final of the ABC Television “New Inventors” programme, for their invention – the EVestG – a novel test to objectively identify and diagnose mental illness.

Jayashri Kulkarni won a prestigious Melbourne Award in November 2014 for individual service to the community. This award was recognition for her services for women’s mental health.

In a recent review of her research centre by Monash University, Professor Kulkarni received a personal commendation for her leadership of her large group of researchers and she was noted to be an enthusiastic, supportive, nurturing academic who inspired research excellence and collegiality.