

Test gauges depression of young

A unique test to measure children's depression has been devised by a Melbourne family therapist.

The depression scale, the first of its kind, was presented to the national Parents of Children in Conflict conference today by its author, Mr Moshe Lang.

Mr Lang, who is senior psychologist with the Victorian Health Commission's Bouverie Clinic, said there was interest in the scale overseas.

"Childhood depression is still denied by those people who prefer to look on childhood as a time of great happiness," he said.

Problem

"But it does exist. In 15 years as a family therapist I have seen it a great deal.

"The biggest problem is that children who are depressed often cannot communicate.

"The scale which I worked out with the help of children is a tool by which they can start talking.

"I'm very impressed with its clinical usefulness."



Mr Lang

Mr Lang said the scale had increased recognition of childhood depression, although its extent in Australia was still unknown.

The scale, which uses a "game" format where children post cards in boxes, has given valuable leads on what makes children depressed.

"Depression always is embedded in a social context, whether it's family, school or friends," Mr Lang said.

"A child who locks himself in his room, refusing to go to school, may be suffering severe depression."