

Informing a national strategy to reduce stigma and discrimination towards people with mental illness that is poorly understood in the community

Project aim

The aim of the project is to undertake consultations to inform a national stigma and discrimination reduction strategy with a focus on mental illness that is poorly understood in the community (such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, psychosis, and personality disorders). The project is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Who we are

The project team includes researchers from the University of Melbourne, LaTrobe University and Charles Sturt University. The team is led by Associate Professor Nicola Reavley from the Centre for Mental Health, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne. Other team members from the University of Melbourne include Dr Angela Nicholas, Dr Amy Morgan, Associate Professor Eva Alisic, Professor Anthony Jorm, Professor Jane Pirkis, Dr Ashley McAllister, Dr Karen Block, Dr Georgina Sutherland, Dr Claudia Marck and Ms Judith Wright. Professor Deb Warr is from Charles Sturt University and Professor Lisa Brophy and Dr Catherine Minshall are from LaTrobe University. Kate Kelleher and Justin Noel are external consultants.

Why we're doing it

Stigma and discrimination towards people with mental illness are common in Australia. While there have been some improvements in community understanding of common mental health conditions (such as depression and anxiety), there is often still misunderstanding and ignorance. This is especially true for less common mental health disorders, such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. These are often poorly understood and attitudes towards people who have these diagnoses are less positive.

Recognising this, the Commonwealth Government's Fifth National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan outlines the need for a national strategy to address stigma and discrimination. This project aims to inform that strategy.

How we're doing it

We will use online focus groups to explore opinions on the barriers to, and enablers of, a national stigma reduction strategy.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in an online focus group that will take around one hour. These focus groups will be held in October or November 2020.

The discussion groups will be audio and video recorded. However, only the audio recording will be kept and the video recording will be deleted. These audio recordings are for internal reporting purposes only and will not be shared with any outside parties.

You will be reimbursed \$50 in the form of a digital gift voucher for your time.

Are there any risks?

Some people may find discussing stigma towards people with mental illness upsetting and some participants may be concerned about their privacy and the confidentiality of their contributions.

We have in place a participant safety protocol so that we can help anyone who becomes upset by the discussion in the focus groups. We will make sure that any participant who becomes upset will be supported, and we will support anyone who wants to stop their participation in the research and recommend appropriate counselling services, if needed.

If you would like to talk to someone further about feeling upset, please call one of the following support services (available 24hrs): Lifeline: 13 11 14 (toll-free) or Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

If you change your mind

Participation in this project is voluntary. If you change your mind about participating, you are free to withdraw from the project at any time until your data is processed, simply by contacting the project coordinator Judith Wright (contact details provided below).

Your privacy

Any data we collect from you will be held under password protection and not given to others. We will protect the confidentiality of your data, subject to any legal requirements. Due to research code requirements, we will be storing the information collected for 5 years after publication of the study findings, but none of your information will be able to be traced back to you.

If you are interested in participating or require further information

If you are interested in participating, please contact Ms Judith Wright at wright.j@unimelb.edu.au or phone: 03 9035 7543.

If you have concerns about the project

If you have concerns about how this research is being run, please contact the coordinator of the project, A/Prof Nicola Reavley on nreavley@unimelb.edu.au or 03 9035 7628.

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Fax: +61 3 9347 6739 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.