

Stigma Towards Depression and Suicide on the Sunshine Coast: A Survey of Our Community's Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs

Research Project Information Sheet

Ethics approval number: A181180

Investigators

- Dr Amanda Clacy (Chief Investigator, Sunshine Coast Mind and Neuroscience – Thompson Institute [SCMN-TI], University of the Sunshine Coast [USC])
- Ms Elise Jione (Manager, Programs (Suicide Prevention, SCMN-TI, USC)
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Project Description (what is the research project about?)

This research project is being conducted by the Sunshine Coast Mind and Neuroscience – Thompson Institute, to help inform the development of the Sunshine Coast Alliance Against Depression and Suicide. The Alliance strives to create a connected community on the Sunshine Coast to improve mental health and resiliency to suicidality and its precursors. For more information about the Alliance, please visit www.thealliance.org.au

Suicide is recognised as a public health crisis both in Australia and around the world, however is also considered one of the most preventable means of death. Given the complex nature of suicide, it is important to ensure that suicide prevention strategies are multifaceted. For example, the Sunshine Coast Alliance for Suicide Prevention calls for a focus on improving general public knowledge about depression and suicide and reducing stigma.

Stigma is a significant cause of shame and embarrassment for those who are suffering from depression. Stigmatizing attitudes exacerbate psychological distress and isolation and are widely recognised as a barrier to help-seeking. Stigma can also lead to distrust, fear and avoidance of people who are experiencing depression. Depression is the most common mental health condition associated with suicide and in Australia, nearly nine people die by suicide each day. It is crucial to understand the community's values, attitudes and beliefs towards depression and suicide, to effectively decrease stigma and increase the public's understanding of these significant public health concerns.

The Sunshine Coast community experiences high rates of mental health conditions, including depression, and has a higher than national average rate of suicide. Significant work continues to occur in the area of Suicide Prevention on the Sunshine Coast, but the need to destigmatize and reduce fear around mental health conditions has been identified as a priority by community stakeholders.

Aim

The aim of this project is to identify the values, attitudes and beliefs towards depression and suicide and its treatment on the Sunshine Coast. Responses collected through this survey will be used to inform suicide prevention activities as part of an evidence-based Alliance for Suicide Prevention.

Participation

You have been invited to participate in this project because you are a member of the Sunshine Coast community and are over 16 years of age. This survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The survey questions will focus on your values, attitudes, and beliefs towards mental illness and help seeking behaviours, and your confidence in the resources currently available on the Sunshine Coast. Depression, anxiety, and suicidality are the mental health conditions focused on in this survey. No identifiable information will be collected as part of this survey.

Please note, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence. If you have a negative experience with the content of the survey, please contact your doctor, a mental health professional, or phone a mental health helpline (e.g., Lifeline (131114) and 1300 MH CALL (1300 64 22 55)).

Risks and benefits of participating

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this project. Research has demonstrated discussing suicide does not increase the risk of suicide. There may be some risks involved in taking part in this study that should be considered however, before signing the informed consent.

The survey may raise some sensitive questions and/or distressing feelings surrounding suicide and mental health due to the nature of the subject matter. The survey has been designed in a way to mitigate this risk, however, if you feel the need to talk to someone about these feelings, you will be encouraged to talk to your doctor, a mental health professional, or phone a mental health helpline.

After completing this online survey, you will be eligible to go in the draw to win one of three \$100 gift vouchers. To maintain the confidentiality of your responses, you will be directed to a separate web page to provide your contact details should you wish to enter the draw. The contact details provided will only be used to contact you if you are successful in winning a voucher. Determination of the three winners will occur by using a list randomizer within one month of the survey closing.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. There will be no consequences of any level of withdrawal. Your decision to participate (or not), will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the University of the Sunshine Coast or the Sunshine Coast Mind and Neuroscience – Thompson Institute.

Consent

Prior to the survey commencing, an “Informed Consent” screen will display a summary of this Research Project Information Sheet, and outlines the purpose of the research and the nature of the questions to follow. You will be asked to select “Yes, I wish to proceed with

the survey questions” to indicate your informed consent, should you wish to participate. If you do not provide consent you will be directed to the end of the survey and thanked for your time. Consent is sought for the use of non-identifiable data in this research project and the use of your data in unspecified future projects that may be undertaken by the investigators as well as other researchers who may apply to use non-identifiable data from this research.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All data collected as a part of this project is non-identifiable and will be analysed and stored according to the University of the Sunshine Coast Human Research Ethics guidelines and USC’s Research Data Management policy.

Participants will not be named in any reports or publications resulting from the research project, and no document containing your name will leave the research site. The information given will be held in a secure location for 7 years after publications, after which time any identifying information will be destroyed.

Results

Results from this survey will be used to inform the development of a community-focused Alliance for Suicide Prevention. Specifically, information regarding the local community’s general awareness surrounding suicide and related mental health issues (i.e., depression and anxiety) will be used to identify any educational needs for specific regions or demographic groups. Unfortunately, you will not be able to request information about your individual data but are welcome to request a summary of the collective research findings on completion of the study by contacting the research team (suicideprevention@usc.edu.au).

Non-identifiable results may be presented at external or internal conferences or meetings, or by publication.

Complaints

If participants have any complaints about the way this research project is being conducted they can raise them with the Chief Investigator (Dr Amanda Clacy) or, if they prefer an independent person, contact details will be provided for the Chairperson of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Sunshine Coast: (c/- the Research Ethics Officer, Office of Research, University of the Sunshine Coast, Maroochydore DC 4558; telephone (07) 5459 4574; email humanethics@usc.edu.au).

Contacts

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The Researchers and the University of the Sunshine Coast would like to thank you for your interest in this project and appreciate the effort involved.