

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WA MENTAL HEALTH COVID-19 RESEARCH
PANEL, HELD VIA ZOOM ON 28 JULY 2020**

ZOOM Link:

<https://uwa.zoom.us/j/559040219?pwd=bJqenFtTEJNNlhNcmRGejVqNVY0dz09>

Or use this link to the same room:

<http://rebrand.ly/wamhcorp>

PRESENT:

Professor Sean Hood (The University of Western Australia) Chair
Dr Travis Cruickshank (Edith Cowan University)
Dr Ali Fardinpour (Wise Realities)
Dr Salam Hussain (The University of Western Australia/Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital)
Dr Elizabeth Newnham (Curtin University)
Dr Evenda Dench (The University of Western Australia)
Dr Vera Morgan (The University of Western Australia)
Sandra Hesterman (Murdoch University)
Professor Peter McEvoy (Curtin University)
A/Prof Wendy Cumming-Potvin (Murdoch University)
Professor Christopher Reid (Curtin University)
Jacquita Affandi (Curtin University)
Dr Judy MacCallum (Murdoch University)
Dr Libby Lee-Hammond (Murdoch University)
A/Prof Nahal Mavaddat (The University of Western Australia)

Executive Officer (Karen Van Staden for Leanne Hall)

APOLOGIES:

Michelle Olaithe (The University of Western Australia)
Professor Romola Bucks (The University of Western Australia)

Previous minutes: accepted

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members.

2. MINDFUL MARGARET RIVER ALLIANCE (MMRA)

Prof McEvoy and Prof Hood have been discussing their activities with Michael Wood of MMRA.

Graham and Michael Wood from the Curtin School of Marketing recently approached MMRA to discuss the promulgation of mental health services throughout Margaret River, by utilising marketing incentives and ideas involving first and third year student groups. A workshop will be held within the next fortnight to talk to the leadership of MMRA to ascertain their aims, objectives and achievements. This experience will assist the students as they endeavour to produce ideas to help MMRA have a greater impact in the community with providers and support services and to build a network and reach out to community members requiring mental health services. Students will also benefit from this activity because they will become more aware of how to communicate with different groups of consumers. MMRA is an important

entity in the current COVID environment and subsequent rising community concern. Graham expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to connect with WAMH-CoRP - a branch of mental health researchers who came together uniquely across all the universities in WA to try to coordinate some mental health responses relating to COVID and potential interface with collaborators. He advised the Committee to contact him should any opportunities arise in the future.

The marketing plan is an important step in implementing and coordinating resources and people. By November, a draft marketing plan will be finalised.

Dr Hussain advised that an incentive parallel to the MMRA is a Government initiative to establish a Fremantle mental health hub, so it is essential for this Committee to try and find a link with the people who are running projects from the hub as there is a lot of community involvement and specialised services being considered. Early involvement with the hub may be helpful.

3 DIRECTORY OF MEASURES (MCEVOY)

Prof McEvoy advised that all the measures for the general baseline survey of tertiary educators and students are ready to go. The links and invitation emails will be forwarded to Members with a request to disseminate widely throughout your respective networks. A strategy for distributing more widely to the general population would be very useful, possibly via the electoral roll. (Update to be provided at the next meeting). The baseline survey includes measures for BHP9 for depression, Gad7 for anxiety, a range of items about different work place stresses, work place supports, physical health questions, exercise, alcohol use, caffeine use, smoking, use of telehealth services for physical and mental health, preferences for using them moving forward, an intolerance of uncertainty questionnaire, individual difference factor in terms of capacity to tolerate uncertainty, and a wellbeing scale. Prof Hood thanked Prof McEvoy for his effort in getting all the measures ready to go. It was noted that an ethics amendment was submitted last week so final ethics approval should be granted prior to launching the survey. The next stage will discuss what to include in the follow up.

Action:

J Affandi to recirculate to the group the *invitation to participants* document together with the brochure that was disseminated to universities. A standard template to be forwarded to Dr E Dench via L Hall.

Dr Dench to check on permissions to sample staff and students at UWA.

4. WORKGROUP UPDATES

a. CIVIC

J Affandi advised that the CIVIC group is going ok – they are exploring the electoral roll at the moment - she will report back to the Committee on progress.

Other FIFO projects involving Civic are also going well (via DETECT and CIVIC) with Mineral Resources and the Mining Council. Currently awaiting support funding for this work.

b. Digital Telehealth

DoH Digital CRC Mental Health Project meeting is scheduled on Wednesday 5 August 2020. Prof Hood is not sure if he will be attending however, Dr Morgan and Prof Waterreus will attend. Participants were asked to report back to the next meeting of this Committee.

c. Workforce

Dr MacCallum advised they have been working on the Civic Mine and the type of baseline qualitative data that will come from that. The next group to be surveyed after universities will be school teachers.

W Cumming-Potvin mentioned that before joining this group, she and Dr Gardner submitted an application for seed funding at Murdoch University. One of the conditions was to have an Early Career Researcher paired with a more established researcher, unfortunately that funding was cancelled due to COVID. Libby advised that she has a small grant from the WA Research Group which supports education - she is interested in exploring with small focus groups, tertiary students' perceptions of the impact of changes to teaching and learning as it went to online mode. In some ways its connected to today's discussions, and was of interest to Libby on how changes contribute to student resilience or perhaps degrade student resilience and contribute to their dependence on certain kinds of support. It will be interesting to see what topics arise from students and staff when interviewed.

Dr Fardinpour updated the Committee on the Fiona Stanley workforce MWellness project. The application for the colour project is being submitted in RGS. He is currently working on the concept art-over which will be emailed to Members for feedback - as Practitioners in particular, on whether you would bring your group therapies to an environment like that.

Prof McEvoy suggested that the project with Dr Newnham could extend to include first responders. He has done some work with St Johns. A pilot study to include risk factors of first responders / paramedics, and pre-hospital workers could lead to further funding. Prof Hood mentioned that the College of Psychiatrists are keen for mental health care workers to have a sub-group analysis to find out the issues of that particular group.

Dr Fardinpour mentioned that he has started working with UWA and other universities on developing simulation projects and virtual reality and is applying for a grant. There is interest from the PCH psychology ward if the grant has merits such as training for students, doctors and specialists. Prof Hood commented that there are certain disciplines in medicine suited to simulations, the clearest one is probably anaesthetics where the simulations are so realistic. What is sometimes witnessed are PTSD behaviours related to training because the unexpected stress is so realistic that it does stress participants – there is a lot of data on this. Staff are trained each year on how to deal with very unwell patients, challenging procedures such as safe control and restraint. Some staff have been injured from the training experience due to a few patients being psychotically driven. Prof Hood is not sure how that would translate to a virtual setting however, he acknowledged that there are many opportunities. Dr Fardinpour commented that safety is one of the affordances of the technology. Kevin Chai at Curtin Centre for Computation is happy to explore the idea of AI and machine learning.

5. PROJECT UPDATES

Prof Hood and Dr Newnham gave an update on the health care workers project:

Each university received an allocation of \$1mil, \$150,000 for a project in Prof Hood's name. The first project meeting occurred on Friday 24 July 2020 to discuss expenditure and to run the project under Dr Newnham. Prof McEvoy and Dr Newnham have identified a key person to be employed on the project which is going well, so the focus now is to finalise the goals and outcomes for this project and submit to UWA. Prof Hood will take responsibility for governance this week. Funding was supposed to be accessible from 1 July 2020.

Dr Newnham has been making progress on ethics, finalising measures, and ensuring relationships are in place for delivery of the survey.

Action: Prof Hood to circulate the governance document to members of this Committee.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Early Childhood Education Project: S Hesterman advised that this project involves two surveys: one for parents, and one for early childhood teachers. The survey for parents of

children from birth to 8 years involved capturing their perceptions in terms of how they supported their child's early childhood education during the COVID period. The survey was distributed through advocacy groups in Australia, to date there have been 820 responses from different States. There is some interesting data on the challenges experienced with home schooling during COVID lockdown. The early childhood teacher survey is being launched next week.

Prof Hood reminded members that this group is available to provide peer review for any imminent projects, as an agenda item.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 25th August at 830am (via same zoom link)