

**WA Health Translation Network  
WA Mental Health COVID-19 Research Panel (WAMH CoRP) Meeting  
Minutes  
Tuesday 31 August 2021, 8.30am – 9.30am  
via Zoom**

**PRESENT:**

Professor Sean Hood (University of Western Australia) Chair  
Professor Andrew Page (University of Western Australia)  
Dr Brodie Heritage (Murdoch University)  
Prof Chris Reid (Curtin University)  
Dr Elizabeth Newnham (Curtin University)  
Dr Enrique Mergelsberg (Curtin University)  
Dr Flavie Waters (University of Western Australia)  
Professor Jo Badcock (University of Western Australia)  
A/Professor Joanne Dickson (Edith Cowan University)  
Dr Michelle Olaithe (University of Western Australia)  
Professor Peter McEvoy (Curtin University)  
Ms Rolee Kumar (University of Western Australia)  
Prof Suzanne Robinson (Curtin University)  
Dr Travis Cruickshank (Edith Cowan University)  
A/Professor Wendy Cumming-Potvin (Murdoch University)  
Ms Lauren White (WAHTN)  
Ms Koshala Shanmugakumar (WAHTN)

**APOLOGIES:**

Professor Anna Waterreus (University of Western Australia)  
Professor Caroline Mansfield (Notre Dame University)  
Professor Rosa Alati (Curtin University)  
Professor Gary Geelhoed (Executive Director, WAHTN)  
Dr Rhiannon Halse (Curtin University)  
A/Professor Peter Wright (Murdoch University)

**1. WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed members.

**2. MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes from the previous meeting held on 22 June 2021 were accepted as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

**3. CIVIC Project Data**

Prof Peter McEvoy and Dr Enrique Mergelsberg updated the members on the CIVIC project data findings collected in 2020 which includes two components, tertiary students and tertiary educators. Prof McEvoy discussed the COVID Belief Scale developed where a three-factor solution has been identified to date, which includes: general risk and safety, governance and personal risk. The team are currently refining the key factors which will predict depression and anxiety. Follow up

measures will be arranged.

The group made the following suggestions:

- A/Professor Joanne Dickson suggested that given the situation in WA, an anticipatory element should be included.
- Dr Michelle Olaith suggested to consider broadening the audience to achieve an international audience/interest. Additionally, she suggested addressing polarization and certain demographic groups, and the load on the three factors and their use of certain resources (ie telehealth).
- Prof Sean Hood indicated that there could be some unique factors from the paper that could be politically interesting.
- Dr Enrique Mergelsberg advised that the team are working on a second paper, which looks at cross-sectional predictors of depression and anxiety. She advised they may consider using TeleHealth and Mental health service usage as a separate paper.

#### **4. WAHTN UPDATE**

Lauren White provided a brief summary of the WAHTN Research Education and Training Program (RETProgram) online training courses, one of which is a course in “Research with People who Experience Mental health Illnesses”. The Learning Objectives of the course include the following:

- Describe the roles and responsibilities of the researcher when undertaking research with people with psychotic disorders and other severe mental illness (SMI).
- Describe the key elements of capacity to consent and will be able to determine whether a person with a psychotic disorder or SMI is capable of providing informed consent.
- Identify the procedures required of researchers to obtain informed consent from participants who have a psychotic disorder or SMI.
- Understand the issues related to recruiting and interviewing research participants who have a psychotic disorder or SMI.

This course is currently due to be reviewed and the group were asked that if they have capacity, to review the course to ensure it includes updated and current information. The course can be found here:

<https://retprogram.org/training/research-with-people-who-experience-mental-health-illnesses/>

As one of the reviewers when the was originally developed, Dr Flavie Waters advised that the course is very informative and was designed for people who are starting in research, in particular the course contains useful information on informed consent. She added that she hopes to review the course, if time permits.

#### **5. WEBSITE AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Prof Sean Hood informed the group that WAHTN has developed a webpage (hosted on the WAHTN website) to reflect WAMH CoRP’s unique activities and resources for mental health research. Additionally, to attract people to the webpage and publicise what this group does. Further suggestions from the group are as follows:

- Include key research findings that are emerging.
- Highlight research and studies that are underway which could be used to educate the broader community on mental health research.
- Populate with resources that are useful for engaging people in Mental Health research.

- Outcomes of the WAMH CoRP including reports and publications.
- Videos and tools for the wider community.
- Updated the Capability Statement.
- Directory of Measures, which will need to be converted from excel to an appropriate format for the webpage.

The webpage is public now and can be found here: <https://wahtn.org/wa-covid-19-research-collaboration/wa-mental-health-covid-19-research-panel/>

## **6. CAPABILITY STATEMENT**

Prof Hood requested that the group members provide a brief statement on the capabilities within their individual teams for special interest working groups. The final Capability Statement would be uploaded to the WAMH CoRP webpage.

## **7. DIRECTORY OF MEASURES**

The Directory of Measures will be formatted for inclusion on the WAMH CoRP webpage. Prof Hood encouraged members to take a look at the existing directory and make any updates.

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/k0xhe60uraa3v9r/AAAoJeNwbaSiW5SYZ9qlxyTka?dl=0>

## **8. WORKGROUP UPDATES**

### **8.1 CIVIC**

Refer to item 3 of these Minutes.

### **8.2 Digital Telehealth**

Dr Olaithe had no progress to report for 2021 on this activity.

### **8.3 Workforce**

Discussion deferred.

## **9. WA Mental Health Act**

The Mental Health Commission is inviting interested parties to apply for grants to facilitate face to face engagement sessions with a diverse array of stakeholders who have a lived experience with treatment under the Act. The public comment period for the Statutory Review has opened (13 August 2021) and closes on 31 January 2022. A link to the announcement can be found here:

<https://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/McGowan/2021/08/Feedback-open-for-Statutory-Review-of-the-Mental-Health-Act.aspx>

Prof Hood advised that this is an opportunity for the WAMH CoRP group to put forward ideas from a research perspective. He requested that the group consider what they might like to contribute in this space. The group will draft a proposal to submit on behalf of the WAMH CoRP.

## **10. PROJECT UPDATES**

### **10.1 Severe Mental Illness**

Prof Jo Badcock advised the group that *A Guide to Measuring Loneliness for Community Organisations* has released. It is the first guide (out of three) for community organisations looking to evaluate their programs or activities designed to reduce loneliness.

Associated links and resources can be found here:

<https://www.gilc.global/>

<https://endingloneliness.com.au/a-guide-to-mesuring-loneliness-for-community-organisations/>

Dr Waters discussed the new Guardianship Act, which came into effect this year, the Act stipulates that carers are required to give consent on behalf of the vulnerable person, who lacks the capacity to consent to research.

Dr Badcock discussed the issues around the different reactions across the Ethics Committees, whom all have varying approaches to consent and how to obtain it from people with a severe mental illness. Dr Waters said that there have been reviews conducted across Ethics Committees on the matter and there is a push to centralise Ethics Committees across WA.

#### 10.2 Other Opportunities

Dr Brody Heritage shared a link to an article related to the systematic review of questionnaires assessing the psychological impact of COVID-19.

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0165178121004790?via%3Dihub>

A/Professor Wendy Cumming-Potvin will provide an update at the next meeting on the qualitative data that was analysed by Dr Judy MacCallum, who has recently retired.

#### 11. **NEW BUSINESS**

Prof McEvoy is currently working on the development of the mental health research strategy for WA, discussion are underway to form a WA Mental Health Research Institute. He will update the group as more information becomes available.

#### 12. **NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 19 October 2021, 8.30am – 9.30am held via Microsoft Teams.