

Self-Help for Depressive Symptoms – Information Sheet for Consumers

You are invited to participate in the above research project, which is being conducted by ORYGEN Research Centre, Department of Psychiatry, The University of Melbourne. The project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee and is funded by an NHMRC Project Grant.

What is the project about?

The project aims to determine the consensus of clinical experts in the area of depression and consumers affected by depression about which self-help methods are likely to be effective in reducing depressive symptoms. Self-help methods are those that can be applied easily by many people at low cost without the need for professional supervision. Messages about these self-help methods could be promoted in the community to reduce the level of depressive symptoms in the population.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to be an expert panel member for determining effective self-help methods for reducing depressive symptoms. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Read summaries of the evidence that we will provide on specific self-help actions. These summaries will be background information to inform your expert ratings.
2. Complete a questionnaire via the internet which asks you to rate whether certain self-help actions are likely to be helpful in reducing depressive symptoms. (If you are unable to access the internet, we will provide a paper version of the questionnaire)
3. You may be asked to complete the questionnaire again, for actions which did not have consensus, after you have seen a summary of the ratings given by other panel members. You can choose to maintain or change your original ratings.
4. Depending on the level of consensus achieved, several rounds of this process may be required.
5. Once a set of self-help actions has consensus, you will be asked to rate the feasibility of the actions, in terms of effort, time and cost involved in carrying them out.

Please note that the expert panel will never meet face-to-face. All tasks will be completed individually in your own time. We expect that the questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. We estimate the total time commitment for this project to be up to 1½ hours, but this estimate ultimately depends on the time taken by each individual panel member to complete the questionnaire and the number of rounds required.

Who is being asked to participate?

We are inviting people to participate as panel members if they have expertise in depression. The panel members will be drawn from Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Ireland, the USA and Canada. There are two categories of panel members:

1. Clinicians who have professional experience in the area of depression
2. Consumers who have personally experienced depression

As a consumer, you were identified as an expert either through having written books or articles about your personal experience of depression available in the public domain, or because you are a member of a consumer mental health organisation (such as the Mental Health Council of Australia, MIND, and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) which has nominated you as a potential participant.

What if I change my 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 and you may also withdraw your data if you wish.

What about privacy?

Any data we collect from you will be held under password protection and not divulged to others. We are interested in the consensus views of the panel, rather than the views of individual members. We will only present the results in statistical summary form.

Are there any risks?

There is a small risk that participants might get upset or distressed from answering the questions. If you do become distressed while answering the questions, please stop completing the questionnaire and seek support if you feel you need to talk to someone about how you are feeling. You may have a support network available to you (including health professionals, family or friends). If not, we can provide suggestions as to where you might seek support.

To help us identify whether you would like us to help you seek support, we will ask you at the end of the questionnaire whether you felt at all distressed by the questions. If you answer 'yes', we will then ask you whether you would like to be contacted by one of the researchers. If you would like to be contacted by one of the research team, we will email you as soon as possible to try to provide suggestions as to where you might seek support. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact the research team (Amy Morgan - coordinator, or Professor Tony Jorm – principal researcher) at any time via phone or email.

What are the benefits?

This project has the potential to reduce the disability due to depressive symptoms in the population. Effective self-help methods could be promoted to the public to reduce both disability from depressive symptoms and risk of developing more severe levels of depression.

Who do I contact to participate in the project?

If you would like to participate in this project or would like further information before deciding to participate, please contact Amy Morgan, email: ajmorgan@unimelb.edu.au, phone: +61-3-9342 3764.

What if I have concerns about the project?

If you have concerns about the *scientific aspects of the study*, please contact the coordinator of the project, Amy Morgan, email: ajmorgan@unimelb.edu.au, phone: +61-3-9342-3764 or the Principal Researcher, Professor Tony Jorm, email: ajorm@unimelb.edu.au, phone: +61-3-9342-3747.

If you have concerns about the *ethics of the study*, please contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, phone: +61-3-8344-2073, fax: +61-3-9347-6739.