**Appendix 8. Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form for Health Professionals**

The University of Newcastle

**Participant Information Sheet/Consent Form**

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| --- | --- |
| **Title:** | Exploring the treatment of post-stroke fatigue and low mood disorders: A qualitative study of patients’ and health professionals’ perspectives and preferences in Australia |
| **Short Title** | Perspectives and Preferences for Post-Stroke Treatment |
| **Ethics Reference Number** | H-2025-0124  |
| **Study Sponsor** | The University of Newcastle |
| **Coordinating Principal Student Researcher** | Yuanchen Liang |
| **Principle Supervisor****Co-lead investigator****Full oversight of research process** | Prof Beata Bajorek |
| **Co-Supervisor****Associate investigator****Full oversight of research process** | Prof Christopher Levi |

**What is the study about?**

This study aims to explore the types of treatments that people may prefer for managing post-stroke fatigue and/or low mood conditions (e.g., depression, anxiety, apathy = low motivation). These preferences may relate to medications, psychological therapies, lifestyle changes, or alternative remedies.

**Do I have to participate?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time without consequences. If you decide to withdraw after starting, you may request that your data not be used, provided this request is made **within 7 days** after your interview.

**Who is conducting and funding this study?**

We are a team from the University of Newcastle, Hunter Medical Research Institute, and Hunter New England Local Health District, consisting of:

* Yuanchen (Chloe) Liang: PhD candidate (the principal student researcher)
* Prof. Beata Bajorek: Clinical Academic Pharmacist
* Prof. Christopher Levi: Clinical Academic Physician

**Who is being asked to participate?**

We are inviting all health professionals practicing in Australia, who have experience in providing care to individuals affected by stroke, to participate in this study. This includes medical doctors, pharmacists, nurses, allied health professionals, and formal carers. To participate, you should have experience in treating post-stroke fatigue or low mood (depression, anxiety, apathy) using any type of therapy, whether it involves medication, complementary therapies, or non-drug strategies.

You can choose to participate via phone, video call (internet – Zoom or Teams online), or in person if you are based in Sydney or Newcastle —whichever is most convenient for you. For in-person interviews, you must be located in Sydney or Newcastle. Interviews will be conducted in private rooms at accessible public venues such as:

In Newcastle: Newcastle City Library (Laman Street), Wallsend Library (Bunn Street), or the Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI, Kookaburra Circuit, New Lambton Heights).

In Sydney: venues may include City of Sydney Library (Haymarket), Marrickville Library, or Green Square Library.

These venues offer appropriate privacy for interviews.

**What does participation involve?**

You will be asked to provide informed consent before you begin any part of the questionnaire or interview. During the interview, a brief scenario will be presented to you on the screen or page. It will describe a particular treatment option (what it is, what is involved in using it). You will then be asked how you feel about it as a possible treatment option for people with post-stroke fatigue or low mood, and what you like or do not like about it. The interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure that we do not miss any of your comments. Immediately after the interview, we will transcribe the discussion and remove any details that could identify you before deleting the recording. If desired, we can provide you with a copy of this anonymous summary.

Your name and contact details may be known to the student researcher (interviewer) for communication and scheduling purposes, and during the interview. This information will be kept secure. Your personally identifying information will never be shared outside of the research team.

Each participant will be assigned a unique Participant Identification (ID) number. A separate, securely stored Master File will contain the link between your name and your ID number. This Master File will only be used for two purposes: (1) to locate and remove your interview data if you choose to withdraw from the study (withdrawal is possible at any time, including up to 7 days after your interview), and (2) to enable us to share any summary findings or reports with you if requested. The Master File will be stored separately from your de-identified interview transcript and other research data to protect your confidentiality.

If you choose an online interview, we will send you a Zoom or Microsoft Teams link via email or phone. You will receive a document describing these scenarios (called 'vignettes') via email or in the postal mail before the interview. These help you consider different treatment approaches and are only used to support your discussion. If you are unable to access email, we can explain the vignettes over the phone.

You will be given the opportunity to review your interview transcript and confirm or amend your responses.The transcript will be sent to you by email or post, depending on your preferred method. You will then have 7 days to review the transcript and make any changes.

**What are the possible risks?**

We do not expect any harm to arise from your participation in this study. We understand that discussing personal or professional challenges may be uncomfortable. Please be assured that the focus of this study is not on evaluating individual practices but on understanding the challenges and needs to improve interventions. Your data and recordings will remain confidential, and only de-identified, aggregated data will be shared in our reports. If at any point you feel upset or stressed, we can arrange free counselling or other support services for you.

If you experience emotional upset or distress during or after the interview, you may wish to contact Lifeline (13 11 14), Beyond Blue (1300 22 4636), or your General Practitioner.

**What support will I receive to participate?**

If you take part in an interview, you’ll receive an AUD $50 as compensation for your time. You can choose to receive this as an electronic Gift card or printed gift card. For in-person interviews, snacks and drinks will be provided.

**Are there any costs for participating?**

Participation in this study is free. If you attend an interview in person, you may incur travel or parking costs. Additionally, if you choose to return any forms (e.g., Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, Withdrawal Form) via postal mail to the student researcher, you may incur standard postage costs. To help cover these expenses, you will receive a $50 AUD gift card as a reimbursement.

**What about privacy?**

Your personal information will stay confidential throughout the study. We take your privacy seriously and will only use your data for research purposes. If you have any concerns about how your data is used, feel free to talk to the principal student researcher (YL).

**Transcript Divas** adheres to strict privacy and data protection standards. Their confidentiality policy can be viewed at: <https://www.transcriptdivas.com.au/transcription-privacy-policy-confidentiality/>. You can find Zoom and Microsoft Teams privacy information at www.zoom.us/privacy and [*www.microsoft.com/en-us/trust-center*](http://www.microsoft.com/en-us/trust-center).

The results may be published or presented, your identity will not be disclosed under any circumstances. Your data will only be shared with your approval.

**What if I want to withdraw from the study?**

You can withdraw from the study up to 7 days after your interview. After this period, your transcript will have been de-identified and data may have already been analysed. However, any personal information that could identify you will be deleted and will not be included in the analysis. To withdraw, please inform the student researcher (YL) verbally, by email, post (if you complete the withdrawal form), or phone.

**What happens when the study ends?**

The information collected will be analysed and published in scientific journals and may also be presented at research meetings. Your identity will not be revealed, but some anonymized quotes may be used.

**Further information/concerns/questions and who to contact**

**Principal Supervisor**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Beata Bajorek |
| Email | Beata.Bajorek@newcastle.edu.au |

**Principle student researcher**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | Yuanchen (Chloe) Liang |
| **Position** | PhD candidate |
| **Telephone** | +61452619472 |
| **Email** | yuanchen.liang@uon.edu.au. |

If you have concerns about your rights as a participant, you may contact the University of Newcastle Human Research Ethics Office at human-ethics@newcastle.edu.au or call (02) 4921 6333.

Any concerns raised will be treated confidentially and investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

**Consent Form – Health Professionals**

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| --- | --- |
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**Declaration by Person Responsible**

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, and I understand the purpose, procedures, and potential risks of this study.
I have had the opportunity to ask questions and am satisfied with the answers I received.
I freely consent to participate in this research study. I understand that I may withdraw at any time or within 7 days after the interview without penalty.
I understand that my responses will be anonymised, and any quotes used in publications or presentations will not identify me personally.

* I am based in primary care:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| * Medical Doctor
 | * Pharmacists
 | * Nurses
 | * Allied Health Professionals
 | * Formal Carers
 |

* I practice within Australia.
* I am involved in the management of people who have post-stroke fatigue and/or mood disorders.

I am aware that I can contact the study team at any time by:

* + emailing the Principal Student Researcher (YL): Yuanchen.liang@uon.edu.au

I understand that I will be given a signed copy of this document to keep on behalf of the participant.

I indicate my agreement as follow:

* Interview on potential treatment for **fatigue** after stroke

and/or

* Interview on potential treatment for **low mood disorders** after stroke
* I agree to audio recording during the interview
* I would like to receive an interview transcript after the interview is completed
* My preferred method of contact is: □ phone □ email

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| --- |
| Name of Participant (Print): |
| Signature: | Date: |

**Declaration by Researcher†**

I have given a verbal explanation of the research study; its procedures and risks and I believe that the person responsible has understood that explanation.

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|  |
|  | Name of Researcher (Print): |  |  |
|  |  |
|  | Signature: |  |  Date: |  |  |
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**Form for Withdrawal of Participation**

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| --- | --- |
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**Declaration by Person Responsible**

I wish to withdraw the participant from taking part in the above research study and understand that such withdrawal will not affect the participant’s relationship with research team or The University of Newcastle.

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| --- | --- |
| Name of Participant (Print): |  |
| Signature: | Date: |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name of Researcher (Print) |  |
| Signature: |  Date: |