



**IMPROVING CASE FORMULATION COMPETENCY IN COGNITIVE
BEHAVIOUR THERAPISTS**

INFORMATION SHEET: GROUP A

Dear ,

I would like to encourage your participation in my PhD project, the details of which are summarized below. The PhD thesis, aims to investigate ways in which the case formulation skills of clinicians can be developed and improved. A case formulation is a theory about how psychological problems develop and are maintained. A useful case formulation guides treatment, signals potential difficulties in therapy and helps organize complex clinical data in a way that makes sense to both the clinician and client or patient. Case formulation is considered to be a cornerstone clinical skill and an important part of practicing as a scientist practitioner. It is hoped that your participation in this study will go some way to increasing the understanding of what might facilitate the development of expertise in this area, particularly as far as the training of psychotherapists is concerned. It is also predicted that participation in this study will have a positive and worthwhile effect on your general clinical practice. Additional information and an opportunity to ask questions will be provided at a meeting for those participants residing in Auckland. Telephone consultations with participants outside Auckland will be scheduled so that questions can be answered by the researcher.

Principal researcher:

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PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Participants will be mental health practitioners who identify their clinical practice as being guided by the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy model. Participants will be recruited directly by the researcher.

PROJECT PROCEDURES

The participants will be randomly assigned to two groups, group A and group B..

The following data will be collected from participants assigned to group A:

- written case formulations based on the case vignettes provided
- responses to the self-reflection questions contained in the workbook
- audio taped, transcribed concluding interviews.

The data will be stored and supervised by the principal researcher who is a Massey University staff member. The confidentiality of the data collected will be preserved. Whilst the project is in progress the data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the principal researcher's office at Massey University, Albany, Auckland. The building is protected by the Massey University security system which provides 24-hour

surveillance. The building is equipped with an alarm. As is customary the data will be stored in the manner described above for the recommended period of five years. The principal researcher, according to the wishes of the participants will then dispose of the data.

Prior to the commencement of the project participants will be invited to attend a meeting where the steps involved in the study will be outlined in more detail. This will be done over the telephone with participants residing outside of Auckland.

PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT

Participants will be asked to provide written conceptual formulations, after reading 2 transcripts of clinical case vignettes before and after the completion of a number of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy interventions contained in a Self-Practice/Self-Reflection Workbook (designed by the researcher), which will be given to each participant. The written formulations will be given a number so that the identity of the participant is protected. The case formulations will then be coded for content and quality. The research assistants coding the case formulations will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

In order to complete the interventions contained in the workbook, the participants will be asked to use their own experience. To elicit this personal material, participants will be asked to think of a current problem which has resulted in an experience of low to moderate emotional intensity, for example; a self-confidence issue, an embarrassment, irritation or annoyance, an ongoing interpersonal issue, an unpleasant recurrent emotion, worries or fears. Participants will be cautioned not to choose a major life challenge to reflect upon in this context. The self-practice exercises in the workbook are designed to enable the participant reach a greater understanding about how their own personal experience can be formulated conceptually, in the context of the Cognitive Behaviour Therapy model. The completed exercises will be **confidential and the sole property of the participant**. After the completion of each of the exercises the participant will be asked to reflect on the professional implications of the process of self-practice. The self-reflection will be guided by questions contained in the workbook. This part of the intervention will be made available to the researcher. **The information gathered in this instance will refer to process, not personal content.** After these steps have been completed participants will be

interviewed. The interview will be audio taped and then transcribed. Interviews will take approximately 15 minutes and will provide the participant with an opportunity to reflect on the previously described process in relation to the effect on the participant's clinical practice in general, and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy case formulation skills in particular. The transcription will provide additional qualitative information for the study. Transcribers, if used, will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement. Questions will be open-ended. Three months after the completion of the project participants will be asked to complete one further written formulation based on a clinical vignette as a follow up. It is anticipated that participants will spend approximately 15 hours of their time on the project. This will be spread over a 3-week period.

When the project has been completed and the results have been analyzed a summary of the results and hypothesized implications of the study will be made available to the all participants.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

You have the right to:

- Decline to participate
- Decline to answer any particular question
- Withdraw from the study at any time
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher
- Be given access to a summary of the findings when the project is completed
- Ask for the audiotape to be turned off during the interview
- You will be given an opportunity to read and edit the transcripts if you wish to.

SUPPORT PROCESSES

It is not anticipated that this project will pose a risk for the participants. All participants work as mental health practitioners and it can be assumed that they will have a good understanding about the implications of the thinking about problems. The Cognitive Behaviour Therapy interventions contained in the workbook are widely

used in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and as participants identity themselves as Cognitive Behaviour Therapists they will have routinely encountered these interventions in the course of their day to day clinical practice. The researcher is an experienced clinical psychologist with the appropriate professional expertise to deal with the consequences and risks of participation in this study.

PROJECT CONTACTS

If you have any questions about the project described above please contact:

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COMMITTEE APPROVAL STATEMENT

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Application 04/58. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 06 350 5249, email humanethicsspn@massey.ac.nz