

CONNECTING FOR BETTER HEALTH PROJECT STUDY 1 WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Version 1: 26th July 2024

WHAT IS THE CONNECTING FOR BETTER HEALTH PROJECT?

The [Connecting for Better Health project](#) is a 5-year National Health and Medical Research Council funded project to help decision-makers implement acceptable, targeted, fair and cost-effective strategies to decrease loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease in Australia. The project has [8 sub-studies and 3 Work Streams](#). The aim of Study 1 is to understand how loneliness and social isolation affect people who are at risk of, or who already have, a chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes or depression.

STUDY 1 WORKSHOP

The [Study 1](#) workshop was held on Monday 29th April 2024 from 10am – 3pm at Monash University, 553 St Kilda Road, Melbourne.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- to expand on an existing Australian conceptual model of loneliness and social isolation
- to refine the conceptual model using input from stakeholders using the principles of Group Model Building
- to develop a concept map of loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease which will be the starting point for developing a conceptual model for a health economic decision aid.

Thirty people with an interest in loneliness and social isolation research attended, including 8 community members, 6 researchers, 4 policy makers, 6 service providers and 6 Monash University staff. Organisations represented included Ending Loneliness Together, National Ageing Research Institute, Mind Australia, Heart Foundation, Department of Health Victoria, Orygen, South East Public Health Unit, Bolton Clarke Research Institute, Prevention United, Live4Life, Australian Disease Management Association, Uniting AgeWell, Yarra City Council and LaTrobe University.



Chief Investigator Professor Cathy Mihalopoulos introduced the project and Ending Loneliness Together founder, Professor Michelle Lim gave an overview of loneliness and social isolation and the conceptual model. Facilitators of large and small group discussions provided the opportunity for attendees to brainstorm related and missing concepts and factors that should be considered in the model. Research Fellow, Matthew Hamilton, closed the day with a presentation on the future health economic model of loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease.

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

Our workshop evaluation survey showed that most attendees were very satisfied or satisfied with the workshop and felt they had the chance to put forward their opinions and ideas. They enjoyed the variety of stakeholders in the room and learning from those from different backgrounds, including people with lived experience of loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease and researchers working in the area. Suggestions for improvement included more time explaining the activities and extending the time spent on small group discussions. Most attendees said they want to stay engaged with the project.

WORKSHOP DATA ANALYSIS

The research team have collated the table activity sheets, group discussion notes and feedback received after the workshop. We are currently conducting a targeted literature review to find the evidence for many of the concepts presented and will present our findings in a draft paper. The paper will also include a draft concept map of loneliness, social isolation and chronic disease, with a focus on mental health, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

NEXT STEPS

Once the data is analysed, we will share the results with workshop attendees, the project Steering Committee and Community Advisory Group and other interested stakeholders. We will give people the opportunity to provide feedback which may be used in future versions of the document. The results of the workshop will also assist with [Studies 2 and 3](#) of the project, which aim to determine the areas in Australia with the highest levels of people experiencing loneliness and social isolation and the cost and quality of life impacts associated with loneliness and social isolation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like any further information on the workshop or the Connecting for Better Health project, please contact Professor Cathy Mihalopoulos, Chief Investigator: cathy.mihalopoulos@monash.edu or Sharon Clifford, C4BH project Manager on (03) 9902 4474 or connecting4betterhealth@monash.edu