

COVID CONFIDENTIAL: exploring the psychological benefits of storytelling in the trauma of COVID-19

We would like to invite you to take part in a study exploring the psychological impact of telling trauma stories being conducted by Prof Paul Bennett, Dr Stephen Johnston and Dr Rachael Hunter from the University of Swansea, Dr David Jones from Cwm Taff Health Board, and Professor Simon Noble from Cardiff University Medical School.

What is the purpose of the research?

Living and working with COVID-19 is undoubtedly stressful, and coping with that stress can be difficult. Talking with colleagues, family members or friends may not be possible due to lockdown or not wanting to burden them with the knowledge and experiences you have had. Formal 'therapy' may also be unwanted and difficult to access.

We are therefore looking at simple ways to help people cope with any emotional difficulties they may experience at this time. Formal 'clinical debriefing' in which people talk with health care professionals about the traumas they face in work presents significant challenges. Who is there to listen? What can you say or disclose – or not disclose?

Nevertheless, there may be advantages in talking about your experiences, in an uncensored and unstructured manner - and in doing so anonymously, at a time when you feel this would be most helpful.

We are exploring whether this is, indeed, the case.

We would like to invite you to take part in a study, in which you securely and anonymously tell your COVID story: your experiences, emotions, concerns, fears, as well as joyous or transforming experiences in the care of people with COVID-19. In doing so, we have two purposes:

- To identify whether this process provides some form of immediate emotional benefit
- To develop a bank of the experiences of people at the heart of the COVID crisis, free from censorship and the need for political or social 'correctness'.

What happens if I agree to take part?

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to:

- answer some simple demographic questions (we appreciate you may not want to answer all or any of these, and this is not a requirement to take part)
- record your 'story' verbally in as unrehearsed and unstructured manner as you want. We encourage you to explore your emotional reaction to events as well as events themselves as far as you feel comfortable, as this may form part of the benefit of this process.
- Complete a small number of questions relating to your experience of the intervention.

Completion of questions should take less than five minutes. The time you spend telling your story is up to you.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

The research has been approved by the College of Human and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Swansea University. While we hope the process of telling your story will be beneficial, there are risks that this may result in strong emotions and upset. The study is truly anonymous, and we cannot provide individual psychological support to participants. So, please be aware of this

before taking part. Links to potential sources of support are available throughout the study, and you can stop your participation at any time you wish.

Now the legal bit....

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Your data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR). All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Your data will only be viewed by the research team.

All electronic data will be stored as a password-protected computer file on a mainframe computer at Swansea University. All stories will be transcribed, any potentially identifying details (hospital, ward, names of colleagues etc) removed. The audio-recording will then be deleted. Any paper records will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the chief researcher's office.

Due to the anonymous data collection process it will not be possible to identify and remove your data at a later date, should you decide to withdraw from the study.

What will happen to the information I provide?

An analysis of the information will form part of our report at the end of the study and may be presented to interested parties and published in scientific journals and related media. *Note that all information presented in any reports or publications will be anonymous and unidentifiable.*

Is participation voluntary and what if I wish to later withdraw?

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to withdraw from the study while taking part, you can stop and remove the recording. The anonymous nature of the study will not allow us to remove your data at a later date.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be Swansea University. The University Data Protection Officer provides oversight of university activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at the Vice Chancellors Office. Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this information section. Standard ethical procedures will require you provide your consent to participate in this study by completing the online consent form that follows this information. The legal basis we will rely on to process your personal data is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. This public interest justification is approved by the College of Human and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee, Swansea University.

How long will your information be held?

Data will be preserved and accessible **for a minimum of 20 years after completion of the research.**

What are your rights?

You have a right to access your personal information, to object to the processing of your personal information, to rectify, to erase, to restrict and to port your personal information. Please visit the University Data Protection webpages for further information in relation to your rights.

Any requests or objections should be made in writing to the University Data Protection Officer:

University Compliance Officer (FOI/DP), Vice-Chancellor's Office, Swansea University, Singleton Park, Swansea, SA2 8PP

Email: dataprotection@swansea.ac.uk

How to make a complaint

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal data has been processed, you may in the first instance contact the University Data Protection Officer using the contact details above.

If you remain dissatisfied, then you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: -

Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

www.ico.org.uk

What if I have other questions?

If you have further questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the lead researcher, Prof Paul Bennett by [clicking here](#).

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE FORM

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Before taking part in the study, please read the information below. If you agree to all the statement, please click YES at the end of the form, and this will take you to the study. If you click NO, this will take you out of the study.

- I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided about this study
- I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I can withdraw at any time during the study
- I understand the nature of the research and have any questions I have about it have been addressed
- I agree to anonymous audio-recordings of my COVID-story being stored, transcribed, and then destroyed
- I have been informed that the information I provide will be safe-guarded.
- I am happy for the information I provide to be used (anonymously) in academic papers and other formal research outputs.
- I have been given the opportunity to download a permanent version of the study information

Thank you for taking part in the study.

If after you have completed this study, you feel you would benefit from more support, there are a number of sources available to you. There is a free wellbeing support helpline 0300 131 7000 available from 7am – 11pm seven days a week, providing confidential listening from trained professionals and specialist advice, including coaching, bereavement care, mental health and financial help.

In addition, a number of websites provide a range of advice and free access to mental health apps:

<https://www.nhsemployers.org/covid19/health-safety-and-wellbeing/support-available-for-nhs-staff>

<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

<https://www.headspace.com/nhs>

Finally, before you go..

If you found COVID CONFIDENTIAL helpful, and would like to record your experiences again, please do so. If you would like to provide a link between these recordings so we can see how your experiences have evolved over time, [please click here](#).

If you would be willing to consider taking part in a more detailed study of the experience of using COVID CONFIDENTIAL or your experiences in the care of people with COVID please contact Prof Paul Bennett, [by clicking here](#), to let us know. We will inform you of any studies you may be interested in.