Study Information Sheet

Title of Research Project: Developing strategies and tools to combat misinformation, fear and stigma in the wake of COVID-19

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You are being invited to consider participating in a research study entitled "**Developing strategies and tools to combat misinformation, fear and stigma in the wake of COVID-19**" funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Before agreeing to participate, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the proposed study procedures. The following information describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, and risks associated with the study. It also describes your right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. To decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is known as the informed consent process. Please make sure all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before participating in the interview.

Background & Purpose of Research:

The purpose of this research is to develop generalizable strategies and tools to combat fear, stigma and misinformation, using experiences from the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have partnered with various community, academic and international organizations to inform this work.

Description of the Research:

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a 30-60 minute telephone interview with a member of the research study team to share your thoughts and perceptions on how stigma, fear and misinformation spreads during COVID-19. The interview will take place by toll-free teleconference.

The interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and assigned a study identification number, and only the research study team member who completes the interview will know your identity. Once the audiotapes have been transcribed and verified for accuracy, the audio file will be erased.

Potential Harms (Injury, Discomforts or Inconvenience):
If at any point, you do not feel comfortable in answering a question, you may choose to skip the question(s) or withdraw early from the study. The COVID-19 pandemic is also a stressful situation to many; if you feel stress or discomfort from participating in a COVID-19 related study, we encourage you to review the resources offered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19

Once you have participated in the interview, should you wish to remove any information that you have shared, you can choose to have your study data withdrawn (up until January 2021). To do so, just email [insert name of research assistant] [insert email information] and they will immediately withdraw and delete your data.

Potential Benefits:

You may not experience any personal benefits from taking part in the study. However, you will have an opportunity to shape the development of strategies and tools to combat stigma, fear and misinformation.

Potential Costs and Reimbursement:
Participation in this study will not have any costs to you. Should you agree to participate in the study, you will be provided with compensation of $25.00 CAD.

Privacy & Confidentiality:
All information obtained during the study will be kept confidential. During the interview, you will be asked to refrain from including any information that may identify you or others, including names, specific dates and locations. The audio recording of the interview will be transcribed word for word and erased after the transcribed information has been verified. You will be identified with a study number only on the audio recording and transcription. For interviews conducted in English or French, the transcription process will be completed by a member of our research staff team or by an automated transcription service, NVivo Transcription. All uploaded data to NVivo is encrypted and securely stored to protect participant privacy according to strict confidentiality and HIPAA standards. NVivo will only have a temporary copy of the audio file for the purpose of transcribing and once transcribed, the audio file will be deleted from their servers and the transcription will be exported and saved on St. Michael's secure severs. For interviews conducted in Mandarin or Cantonese, the audio recordings will be translated and transcribed by a professional translation service. Recordings and transcripts will be stored in separate electronic folders and will be password protected and saved on a secure institutional server at St. Michael's Hospital and only members of the study team will have access to the master linking log.. The audio recording of the interview will be securely stored and handled at all times.

You will also be asked to complete an honorarium form; your personal information will be collected for the sole purpose of processing your compensation [*members of the public only*]. The accounting department of St. Michael's Hospital will receive a copy of the honorarium form in order to process the honorarium cheque. Their department will retain this information as per their departmental requirements.

Study personnel will ensure that all files are encrypted and password protected. All information collected will be stored for seven years. No information identifying you will be transferred outside the study team unless required by law. The Unity Health Toronto Research Ethics Board may look at the study information collected for the purpose of monitoring the study. Data will be retained for no more than 7 years. It is important to understand that despite these protections being in place, there continues to be the risk of unintentional release of information. The principal investigator and study team at St. Michael's Hospital will protect the study records and keep all the information confidential to the greatest extent possible. The chance that this information will be accidentally released is minimal.

Participation and Withdrawal:
Your participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to not participate or you may withdraw at any time. Your participation, or choice to not participate, will not affect your current and future care or relationships at Unity Health Toronto. Once you have participated in the interview, you can choose to have your study data withdrawn (up until January 2021). To do so, just email the research assistant and they will immediately withdraw and delete your data. **Your consent to participate in this study will be obtained verbally and audio recorded by the interviewer at the start of the interview.**

Publication of research findings:
The results of this study may be presented at conferences, seminars or other public forums, and published in journals. We will publish our results in aggregate form only (this means that you will not be identified by your name anywhere). Transcripts and audio recordings will not be released, but summary of data and quotes from transcripts may be published, but not in a manner that allows the data identification of individuals. We will not share your information or contact information with any other researchers or organizations not involved on the study team. The Unity Health Toronto Research Ethics Board may request to look at the study information collected for the purpose of monitoring the study.

Study Results:
You may be provided with a copy of the study report to review upon request.

Study Contact:
For further information or if you are interested in participating, please call or e-mail Suvabna Theivendrampillai (suvabna.theivendrampillai@unityhealth.to).

Research Ethics Board Contact:
If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of Unity Health Toronto's Research Ethics Board at (416) 864-6060 ext. 2557 during business hours.

Should you agree to participate, the study research staff will review this information with you over the phone.

Please keep a copy of this document for your records.