

## Plain Language Statement

<b>Title</b>	Moral Distress and wellbeing of healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic	
<b>Short title</b>	Moral Distress and Wellbeing in Healthcare Workers Study	
<b>Protocol number</b>	2021-20355-13622-5	
<b>Principal Investigators</b>	A/Professor Andrea Phelps	(03) 9035 7446
	Dr Lisa Dell	(03) 9035 5599
<b>Co Investigators</b>	Dr Ellie Lawrence-Wood Ms. Jenelle Baur	

This Participant-Information-Sheet-and-Consent-Form (PICF) tells you about the research project. It explains the processes involved participating in this research study. Knowing what is involved can help you decide whether you would like to participate. Please read this information carefully, and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary; there is no obligation to take part in the study. **Your answers will be completely confidential and any personal details, which may identify you in any way, will not be passed on to any organisation. Your de-identified data will only be accessible by the Phoenix Australia research team.**

If you decide you want to take part in the research project, you will be able to proceed with the online survey and tick the box to consent to going ahead. This is your copy of the Participant Information and Consent Form to keep.

### Brief description of the study

The study aims to develop a better understanding of the impact of working in the healthcare sector during the COVID-19 pandemic on the wellbeing of healthcare workers. We are particularly interested in understanding the impact of the range of morally challenging circumstances that healthcare workers may have been exposed to.

These may include, for instance, inadequate personal protective equipment leading to concerns about risk to self and loved ones, excessive demand on resources forcing a compromise in the usual standard of care, and concerns over the delivery and adequacy of care in the move to remote service delivery. These unforeseen events can expose healthcare workers to moral and ethical dilemmas which may transgress their moral beliefs or standards.

Developing a better understanding of impacts on healthcare workers, of working within the COVID-19 environment, is an essential step in the development of future protections aimed at reducing mental health risks in this population. It is hoped that the findings from this study can

be used to guide the development of appropriate supports (e.g., policy change, best practices, workplace stress management, or clinical treatments) to protect HCWs and reduce negative impacts related to exposure to morally distressing experiences.

### **What does participation in this research involve?**

Participation in this study will involve completing an anonymous online survey. The survey will ask questions about ethical-moral dilemmas you may have experienced in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic which may have impacted your moral values (e.g., the impact on identity, relationships, beliefs, and behaviour). You will also be asked about your current mental health. Participants will also be asked general background questions about aspects of their life and healthcare work.

Participants will be given the option to provide a very high-level description of any events they experienced, without providing any specific information such as names, dates, places. Note, you are not required to provide this information and can continue with the rest of the questions without providing this description. Participation in this study is completely anonymous, and your responses are de-identified at the time of participation, therefore can never be linked back to your individual personal details.

This questionnaire is likely to take between 25 and 35 minutes to complete. It is advised to complete the questionnaire in one sitting, however, there is the option to save and return to it later if you wish. Direct access to the online survey is available from the following link:

<https://is.gd/MorallInjuryOutcomesHCW>

### **Benefits**

We cannot guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from this research, however possible benefits may include contributing to the development of better supports and interventions for healthcare workers, as this study may help develop a greater understanding of the impacts of working in healthcare during a pandemic.

### **Risks of participating**

There are no foreseeable risks by participating in this study; however, it is possible that either during or following the survey you may experience some distress having thought further about the impact of working in healthcare during COVID-19. This is not necessarily something to worry about particularly if these feelings pass quickly, and they are usually reflective of the fact that it was a challenging experience for you. The questions asked in this study are for research purposes only and no action or interventions will be taken based on your responses.

Should you experience significant distress during the study we encourage you to stop the survey and speak with someone you trust, your care provider (e.g., GP, psychologist, chaplain), and/or call the following numbers for ongoing support:

- Lifeline Australia (13 11 14)
- Beyond Blue (1300 224 636)

### **Withdrawal from the research**

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and there is no obligation to take part. If you wish to withdraw you can simply stop the survey and close your internet browser. Once you have submitted your responses to the online survey, we will be unable to locate and remove your responses as participant responses are not identifiable.

### **Privacy and confidentiality**

Your responses to the online survey will be anonymous and thus the data collected will be non-identifiable. To further protect anonymity, specific work-related details (e.g., years of work, type of work) will be aggregated into groups before reporting. The researchers will not be able to attribute individual responses to individual names or email addresses. All responses will be

securely stored in a data file, combined with other participants' responses, with any identifiable information linking responses to participants removed in advance.

By consenting to participate in this project you are also giving extended consent, meaning that your non-identifiable data can also be used for future projects that are directly related to this one. You will also be consenting to the sharing of your de-identified data interstate or outside of Australia with researchers collaborating with Phoenix Australia.

Research data collected will be maintained by Phoenix Australia, stored under lock and key or secure password access, and will be kept completely confidential. Your electronic data will be kept for at least 5 years from the date of last publication of findings. After that time, your data will be securely destroyed by electronic deletion. Only the Phoenix Australia researchers will have access to participant datasets.

### **Other relevant human research ethics considerations**

The ethical aspects of this research project have been approved by the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This project has been assigned the protocol number 2021-20355-13622-5. Ethical approval for this project has been granted for a period of 3 years.

This project will be carried out according to the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). This statement has been developed to protect the interests of people who agree to participate in human research studies.

### **Dissemination of research findings**

It is anticipated that the results of this research project may be published in scientific journals. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that no individual can be identified (i.e., aggregated data).

Please contact the research team at [phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au) if you wish to receive a short summary of the overall findings at the conclusion of the project. Upon your request, the research team will email you a 200-word summary after the study is completed.

### **Concerns or complaints**

Should you have any complaints or concerns about the manner in which this project is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact the co-ordinating principal investigator Dr Lisa Dell on 03 9035 5959 or [lisa.dell@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:lisa.dell@unimelb.edu.au).

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: [HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au). All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.

### **Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research project is being conducted by Phoenix Australia. No member of the research team will receive a personal financial benefit from your involvement in this research project (other than their ordinary wages).

***THIS INFORMATION SHEET IS YOURS TO KEEP***

## CONSENT FORM

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### ***THIS CONSENT FORM IS YOURS TO KEEP***

I give my consent to participate in the project mentioned above on the following basis:

1. I have read the aims of this research project, how it will be conducted, and my role in it. I am also aware I can contact the researchers at Phoenix Australia for any clarity.
2. I understand that the purpose of this research is to investigate the psychological impacts of working during the COVID-19 pandemic in HCWs (with a focus on moral injury).
3. I understand that my participation in this project is for research purposes only.
4. I acknowledge that the possible effects of participating in this research project have been explained to my satisfaction.
5. I understand that in this project I will be required to complete an anonymous online survey.
6. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from this project anytime without explanation, prejudice, or detriment to my employment.
7. I understand that it may not be possible to withdraw any data I provide as there will be no way to identify my data after it has been entered into the survey.
8. I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne for at least 5 years following the last publication of research findings.
9. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded; my data will be password protected and accessible only by the named researchers.
10. I understand that after I tick the relevant check box on the study survey webpage, I am consenting to participating in this research project.

I am cooperating in this project on condition that:

- the information I provide will be kept confidential
- the information will be used for this project and future related projects

- the research results will be made available to me at my request and any published reports of this study will preserve my anonymity

If I wish to receive an automatic email that provides a short summary of the overall main findings (in approximately 200 words), I will contact the Phoenix Australia researcher team at [phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:phoenix-research@unimelb.edu.au) to provide my email address.

This is my copy of the participant information sheet and consent form to keep.

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