

Project Title	A systematic review of the literature to better understand mental health literacy in children, adolescents and adults
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Lead discipline (please select one)

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing and Midwifery | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Economics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Allied Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Biostatistics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicine | <input type="checkbox"/> Value-based Healthcare |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-clinical | <input type="checkbox"/> Epidemiology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Policy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other |

Outline of the project 250 words max

In a given year, 14% of children aged 4–17 will experience a mental health problem, yet few will seek help from a medical professional. A number of barriers to help-seeking for mental health difficulties have been identified, including lack of awareness of the signs and symptoms of mental disorders, lack of perceived need for care, limited knowledge of the availability and effectiveness of services, and community and personal stigma. Parents and caregivers are often fundamental to young people obtaining access to care, however their attitudes and awareness frequently dictate if care is sought. These barriers concerning attitudes, beliefs and knowledge are modifiable and can be collectively conceptualised as mental health literacy.

Some scales exist to measure mental health literacy in adults, but few, if any, valid measures exist in children or adolescents. Likewise, it is unclear how many measures assess the mental health literacy of parents/caregivers concerned with the mental health of their child/adolescent. The aim of this project is to identify and describe existing measures used to assess child mental health literacy in children, adolescents and parents/caregivers and to identify measurement gaps. The knowledge gained will subsequently be used to develop new measures to assess mental health literacy in parents/caregivers and children.

This project will involve a systematic review of the literature to identify what is currently known on the topic for each population group. It will provide a comprehensive overview of the knowledge to date and will be important for the development of much needed new measures.

Proposed research methods

The academic literature will be systematically searched using multiple search engines (such as PsychInfo and PubMed) with carefully defined search criteria. All references (data) obtained from the search will be transferred into a reference managing software (Endnote). The title and abstract will then be screened to determine if the article meets eligibility criteria for inclusion in the review. This process will be completed independently by two researchers and then compared. A full text of the articles meeting inclusion criteria will be collected and then two researchers will code all articles. This process includes reading each article and carefully recording specific methodological processes and results relevant to the study. Finally, a methodological quality assessment of each article will be conducted using a valid tool. The student will be involved in all phases of the review process.

Preferred study discipline being undertaken by the student

This research falls within public health and mental health fields. It would benefit students studying in the disciplines of psychology, public health, epidemiology, health policy, medicine and nursing.

Benefits to the student and to the department

The student participating in this project will develop valuable skills in the analysis, review, and synthesis of literature. It will provide the student with a strong understanding of the processes involved in systematic reviews and the critical appraisal of literature, as the project involves careful and in-depth reading and reporting of literature, as well as an assessment of research quality. These skills will greatly benefit the student in their future studies and career, in that they will frequently be required to identify relevant literature and adequately comprehend study findings and limitations to make clinical decisions and choices.

The Department will benefit by having access to a strong understanding of mental health knowledge and literacy in children, adolescents, and adults. Ultimately, this research project will lead to the identification of gaps in existing measures used to assess mental health literacy and assist in the development of new measures to fill this gap. These measures will be important in understanding mental health literacy in children and in understanding the mental health stigma and literacy of parents regarding their child's mental health. These measures can be used by Departments within the ACT Health Directorate to understand current mental health knowledge needs in children and parents to ultimately support families to manage child mental health.

Alignment with Government Research Priorities 100w max

This aligns with the ACT Government priority of 'Supporting Mental Health'. In a given year, 14% of children aged 4–17 will experience a mental health problem, yet few will seek help from a medical professional. Barriers to seeking help include attitudes and awareness of mental health problems, present in children or youth and their parent/caregiver. This project is designed to provide a systematic overview of attitudes to mental health problems and a summary of the measures currently used. Understanding these barriers will help to develop ways to encourage help-seeking and will support mental health in children and youth.

Department within ACT Health Directorate / Canberra Health Services where the student will be based

Centre for Mental Health Research, Research School of Population Health, The Australian National University

Please submit form to preclinical.research@act.gov.au