Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service’s Knowledge, Opinions and Understandings of Adolescent Self-Harm and Social Media: Is Self-Harm the Same for Different Health Professionals?

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.

_________________________________
Melissa Marie Partridge
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“Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to stay in the same place. And if you wish to get anywhere, you must run at least as twice as fast as that!”

- Lewis Carroll
Abstract

Self-harm and suicide are serious health concerns facing contemporary society, to the extent that some have even declared both to be at epidemic levels. The decision to mainstream mental health into generalist health services, has meant that many health professionals are being required to treat self-harm, despite never having received any specific knowledge or training about it, and whilst potentially harbouring negative attitudes towards the behaviour. The study reported here developed a 51-item Self-harm Survey, to assess whether CAMHS medical and nursing staff (generalist health professionals) differed from allied health and support service employees in their general knowledge, opinions and understandings, and workplace experiences relating to self-harm, as well as in their views on the impact social media has on self-harming adolescents. 82 CAMHS participants completed the survey. Results indicated that contrary to the hypothesis, medical and nursing staff were found to have higher general knowledge than allied health and support service staff, providing evidence that current training programs being administered to address the gap in knowledge have been effective. However, it appears from both the qualitative and quantitative analyses that such programs need to be updated to include proactive support skills, especially around the link between self-harm and social media.

Keywords: self-harm, adolescents, clinical attitudes, CAMHS, social media