

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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This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Psychology (Honours), Murdoch University, 2013.

Word count: 11, 995, including references

Written for the Journal of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy

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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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Year: 2013

General Acknowledgements

Suzanne Dziurawiec, thank you for all your patience, understanding and guidance. Amy, thank you for taking me under your wing, and all the support and direction you have given me. Tove, it has been so wonderful working side by side with you. Thank you for all your time and help, despite having your own thesis to finish you were never too busy to help me with mine.

A special thanks to the Executive Director of CAMHS and the Director of CAMHS Clinical Services for their assistance in facilitating this research project.

My amazing family, where can I start? Peter Dingle, without you I know I wouldn't have made it here today. You motivated me to follow in your academic footprints, and over my past four years at Murdoch have helped me in so many ways, instilling in me your love of learning, but above all a belief in myself of what I could do. You are such a special person to me Pete and I love you so much. To my amazing grandparents, thank you for your prayers, your hot meals and above all, your love. I love you both so much.

Mum, you have been the sole reason I made it through this year. You have put my needs in front of your own, just like you have for the past 25 years. You are the best person I know, and am so proud and blessed to have you as my mum. I could not have done it without you, I love you so much.

To my beautiful fiancé, Brodie Barrett. Your unwavering support through this last year of my studies has been truly appreciated. Every time I wanted to give up, you wouldn't let me, instead you would tell me how much you believed in me and find a way to make everything better. Thank you for your serenity, your smile and for putting up with me. I love you so much.

And above all, for you, Sienna. My beautiful daughter. You are my biggest blessing; you were my saving grace, and continue to be my strength, my happiness, and my world. Mummy loves you with all her heart baby girl.

*“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