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## People aged over 65 encouraged to take part in mental health services study from home

Beyond Blue is encouraging people to participate in a Macquarie University study that is investigating the effectiveness of mental health services delivered remotely to people aged over 65 in NSW.

The free Stepped Care Effectiveness Trial for Ageing Adults gives participants the option of accessing services face-to-face or via phone or video conferencing to manage worry, anxiety and low mood.

**Macquarie University Department of Psychology Professor Viviana Wuthrich** said the study, involving mental health services at **Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange** and **Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney**, comes at a time when social isolation is a concern for many people.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is causing many people to worry about their health, the health of loved ones, economic impacts, job losses or cancelling of activities or events,” Prof Wuthrich said.

“While current physical distancing restrictions are helping contain the spread of coronavirus, seniors are spending more time at home and, in some cases, alone.

“This study by Macquarie University is timely because it gives people aged over 65 an opportunity to manage their worries from the comfort of home.

“Delivering mental health services via online video conferencing or over the phone means people can continue following appropriate physical distancing measures and access services without leaving the house.”

Prof Wuthrich said researchers are looking for people who may be experiencing one or more of the following:

- Feeling isolated, alone or overwhelmed
- Constantly feeling worried or concerned
- Often feeling so sad that nothing can cheer you up
- Lacking motivation to participate in your usual activities
- Finding it difficult to get out of bed or complete day-to-day tasks

Participants will receive free mental health treatment during the study.

Researchers will track the progress of participants with follow-up questions during the next 12 months and will ask for permission to access their medical records.

The study has been funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council and Beyond Blue.

**For more information about the study, phone (02) 9850 8715, visit [tiny.cc/STOP-Study](https://tiny.cc/STOP-Study) or email [STOP@mq.edu.au](mailto:STOP@mq.edu.au)**

*The Beyond Blue Support Service is available via phone 24/7 on 1300 22 4636 or via [beyondblue.org.au/get-support](https://beyondblue.org.au/get-support) for online chat (3PM – 12AM AEST or email responses within 24 hours). The new Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Service is available 24/7 at [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au). Its dedicated phone line, staffed by mental health professionals briefed on the pandemic response, is now open on 1800 512 348.*