

30 September 2024

Fergus Bailey
ARTD Consultants

By email to: submissions@artd.com.au

Dear Fergus

Re: Australian Centre for Disease Control Open Submission Invitation: Understanding the community's views and perspectives on data use

Thank you for consulting the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) to assist the Interim Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in understanding the community's views and concerns on the CDC's planned use of data, and strategies for communicating the use of data.

The RANZCP supports that quality data can greatly assist in all areas of healthcare, including communicable disease control and other public emergencies. The RANZCP is supportive of an evidence-based approach that prioritises people with mental illness who are at increased risk of poor physical health, morbidity and mortality.

The RANZCP's primary concern regarding the use of health data for people with mental illness relate to privacy and security. It is of paramount importance that consumer health information be properly protected, handled and stored to avoid any breach of privacy, ensuring the right level of security is applied.

It is also important to ensure that people with mental illness provide informed consent for their health data to be collected. How data is collected and used can affect the trust between the person and their psychiatrist. Maintaining confidentiality and transparency about how data is handled is important for sustaining this trust. People with mental illness may have concerns about mental health data being misused in a way that perpetuates stigma or discrimination, for example being used inappropriately by employers or insurance companies.

It is important to allay concerns by providing clear information about how the health data will be used, for example whether this is being used for research or organisational purposes or for the direct benefit of individuals. People should further retain the ability to access, correct and control their data. There are specific considerations in psychiatry in that caregivers play an important role in supporting a person with a mental illness. Involvement of caregivers in communication related to data collection and use can help contribute to an effective therapeutic alliance.

Finally, it is important that the CDC consider integration of mental health data in line with national mental health frameworks and policies to carefully to manage data sharing and promote good outcomes.

Should you wish to discuss any of the matters in this letter, please contact Nicola Wright, Executive Manager, Policy, Practice, and Research at nicola.wright@ranzcp.org or on (03) 9236 9103.

Yours sincerely



Dr Elizabeth Moore

President

Ref: 4627