OVERVIEW OF FEEDBACK FROM CMHDARN RESEARCH ETHICS FORUM - DEC '12

Introduction and overall feedback

- This draft report is a summary of feedback obtained from delegates attending the CMHDARN Research Ethics Forum, held on 4 December 2012.
- Thirty nine people completed evaluation forms, resulting in a **response rate of 71%**, indicating that the data in this report is a very good indication of general participant opinions.
- Average rating of the Forum overall was high, at 4.2, with responses ranging from 3 to 5 (where 1= poor, and 5 = excellent) (see Figure 1).

Event snapshot

Feedback response rate	71%
Average overall rating (out of max 5)	4.2
Average change in knowledge about forum topic	From 3.4 (before forum) to 4.1 (after forum) out of 5
Average rating for all Forum outcomes	4.0
Most useful session	'What are ethics?' (rated 4.4 out of 5)
Least useful session	Workshop & discussion (rated 3.8 out of 5)
Suggestions for improvement - most common theme	Less repetition; one unengaging speaker; noise from next door room.
General positive feedback - most common theme	Range of speakers, and content. Praise for Karen F.

QUESTION 1   Change in knowledge

Participants were asked to rate their knowledge of the Forum topic before and after the Forum, to gain insight into overall levels of knowledge, and to help gauge the effectiveness of the Forum content. On a scale where 1 = very low knowledge, and 5 = very high, the average level before the forum was 3.4. This increased to 4.1 after the forum (see Figure 4). However, 9 people did not state their knowledge after the forum, which may have skewed the results slightly. Just over half (20) stated that their knowledge had increased. Interestingly, two people indicated a decrease, suggesting that they had initially overestimated their knowledge.

Change in Knowledge	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Knowledge increased	20	51.3
Knowledge stayed the same	8	20.5
Knowledge decreased	2	5.1
Did not say	9	23.1

Figure 4 – Average participant self-rating of knowledge of research ethics – before and after forum
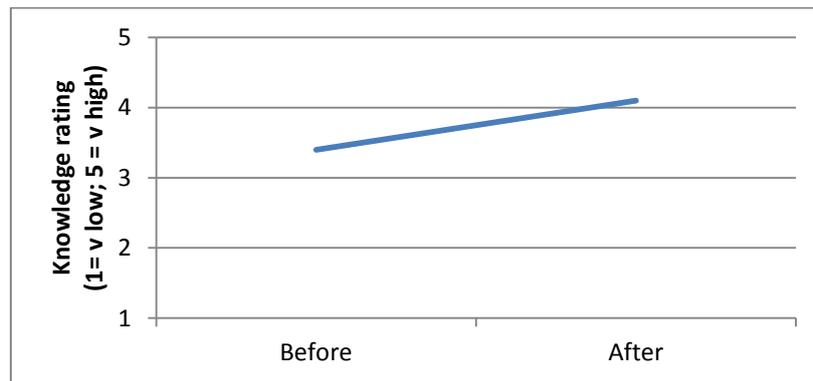
QUESTION 2   Participants and Organisation

58 people registered for the forum, from 38 different organisations. This included presenters. 56 attended on the day. The data below represents those people completing feedback forms.

| Number	Organisation
10	Staff from an MHCC member organisation
5	Staff from a NADA member organisation
3	Staff member of joint MHCC/ NADA member organisation
2	Consumer/Client
1	Carer
20	Staff member of another NGO
8	Researcher/ Academic
3	Other
1	Nil response

NB- Multiple responses received…and included some of the presenters.

QUESTION 3   Size of organisation

Number	Size of org
8	10 full time equivalent (FTE) or less
3	11-25 FTE
12	26-100 FTE
13	Over 100 FTE
2	Blank
1	Not applicable
39	*Total*

QUESTION 4   Overall Ratings

Figure 1 - Overall ratings for Forum
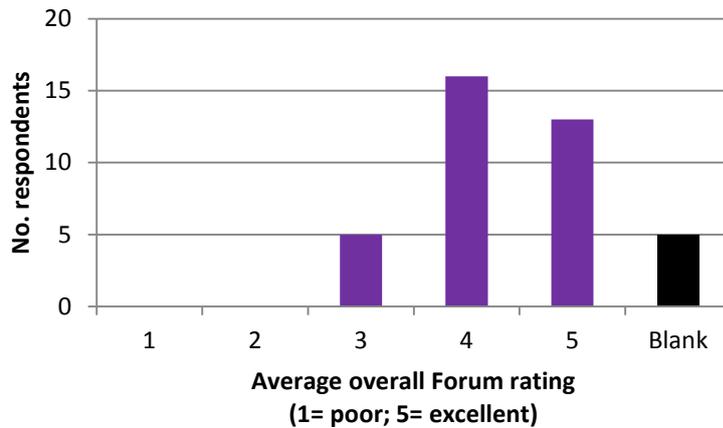
GENERAL COMMENTS

23 comments

A.   Positive Comments   12
− I think this day was probably the single best day of training/ networking/ conferencing that I have attended in my 8 years attending such events. Brilliant work, amazing speakers, beautifully organised
− Fantastic, well organised, planned and brilliant speakers
− It's good, interactive and informative), thank you and the food is delicious
− Great opportunity to learn about ethics in research with relevant organisations and wide variety of experienced speakers
− This was a first class, thoughtfully constructed, thought provoking seminar. Even better it wrapped up with exchanging views on actions. Warmest congratulations and thanks!
− I work in the disability sector and am committed to working with industry partners (NGOs, funders, universities (to ensure that we all have consistent quality understandings of ethics in research. Currently disability sector is very inconsistent. The Forum was very valuable for us to go back to the sector and do something similar.

B.   Suggested improvements   7
− Content was repetitive in first 2 sessions
− Overall, it was time well spent, however the emphasis on MH research issues was too strong. Ethics in research is equally relevant in all social research areas. Quality of presenters varied from excellent to poor. The background noise (next door) was distracting and disturbing
− Some speakers assumed more knowledge of the ethics 'system' than I had (e.g. NEAF, LNR, HOMER)
− Some of the speakers were more relevant than others. Not enough discussion
− More discussion & debate needed. Too many presentations for a full day and overlap of information.

QUESTIONS 5 & 6: Forum Outcomes & Usefulness

Question 5: Forum outcomes:
1. Helping attendees to learn about ethical processes and their importance
2. Helping attendees to gain insight into some practical issues and dilemmas
3. Enabling attendees to contribute to discussion about models for ethical approvals in the community sector.
- As can be seen in Figure 2, the level of agreement with the three outcome statements ranged from 3.8 out of 5, to 4.2.

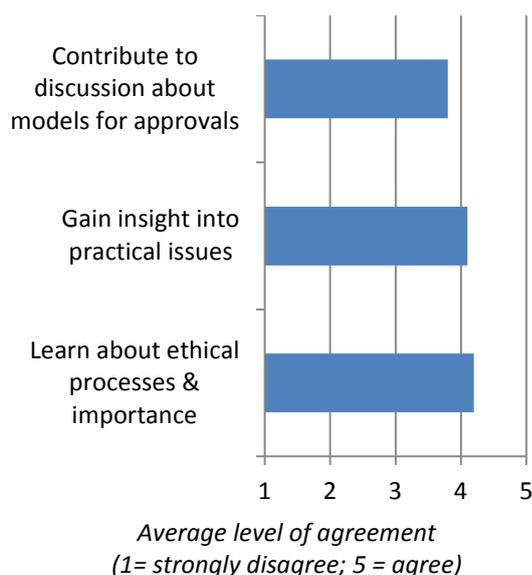Figure 2 – Average participant level of agreement with Forum outcomes

Figure 3 – 'How useful did you find the following sessions?'

Contribute to discussion about models for approvals

Gain insight into practical issues

Learn about ethical processes & importance

1 2 3 4 5

Average level of agreement
(1= strongly disagree; 5 = agree)

Ethics - what are they, why important?

Ethics in practice

Org. approaches to ethics…

Workshop and discussion

1 2 3 4 5

Level of usefulness
(1 = not at all; 5 = very useful)

Question 6: Usefulness of session

- In relation to the usefulness of each of the sessions, as illustrated by Figure 3, respondents felt that the most useful session was the initial one: 'Ethics – what are they, why are they important', with an average level of usefulness of 4.4.
- The session with least support was the workshop and discussion. However this still achieved an average rating of 3.8.

QUESTION 7: What was the session you gained the most from, and why?
41 comments

Session	Number
Morning	16
Pre lunch	11
Panel and Workshop	6*

*NB * Quite a lot of people left at lunchtime or afternoon tea time. This has probably impacted on these figures.*

A. Morning Sample comments as to why
- ethics research, putting the national guidelines into plain English
- Janette Perz - comprehensive introduction to the topic and as I am relatively new to the ethics arena this was just what I needed! Good, solid content, well presented
- Helpful in how do you go about it, what should we be doing
- loved the academic theory and then the actual implementation.
- (They) were both very informative and clear. (They) provided solid facts without unnecessary and time consuming waffle
- that formal institutional ethics approval is the final and not always necessary step in ethics review process, that it is a much larger consideration process. The reminder that it should be treated as a moral consideration not a legal protection process.
- for challenging us on why we do research and if it is really necessary
- The first session of the day involvement me most in the 'hard questions" - the "navel gazing"

B. Pre- lunch Sample comments as to why
- (Karen) discussion about what ethics is about was useful for me. Her breakdown of the components was easy to understand

- for challenging us on why we do research and if it is really necessary
- (They) were both very informative and clear. They provided solid facts without unnecessary and time consuming waffle
- (both morning sessions) really addressed foundational issues and set the day up beautifully

C. Afternoon Sample comments as to why
- loved the academic theory and then the actual implementation.
- (Alan) was very useful , slides/info for a small NGO to adapt
- Loved the workshop - so many ideas

D. General comments: sample   10
- Panel - lost the thread somewhat - focus on structures and lost issue based discussion
- Knowledge of the broad range of everyday working activities ethics and ethical review could cover
- Ethics in practice, built on from earlier session and provided insightful, informed opinion about practically applying ethics and its formal evaluation structures, within a community-based practice
- When do we need ethics approval from HREC and when do we need internal ethics approval. Because we don't have expertise on ethics in our organisation, but always wonder if we need ethics approval for our evaluation program
- All of them were good. What a small NGO needs to be aware of in conducting research and evaluation.
- Organisational approaches - reassuring to know that other organisations are grappling with the same issues and how they have addressed them.

QUESTION 8:   Were you able to meet new people, and in what ways was this beneficial to you?
24 comments
No comments x 2- No, but that is my issue! Limited networking

Yes comments & benefit

Benefits of Networking	Number
Understanding of other organisations	12
General	6
Impact on work / practice	4

General Comments sample
- yes - people of noted professional esteem are voting with their feet to participate in our network
- Thought the table discussion in the last section was a good way to get to know other org's
- Fantastic opportunity and I had a number of conversations that will feed directly into the advocacy work I do and conference presentation I am giving
- Yes - learning about approaches other NGOs are taking to research & ethics
- Yes- helpful to network with researchers in other orgs - hopefully beneficial for future collaboration/partnerships
- Yes, very valuable, usual opportunity to network and learn from others. I feel like the afternoon inadvertently got stuck on ethics committees- compared to the wonderful morning where emphasis was given to thinking and behaving ethically

Understanding of other organisations Sample
- Yes, and the benefits are around understanding how other NGOs in MH deliver services thereby enhancing knowledge of what is available for our clients (particularly those in rural/regional areas)
- Yes. Sharing practices in our organisation and also experience in other organisations
- Yes! Was able to offer a number of organisations access to ethics resources developed by an NGO with long history. Learnt about challenges faced by others and different needs of large and small org's
- Yes - hearing where other agencies are at
- Yes, interesting mix of work environments/occupations, ages, backgrounds etc. Different reasons why people were here

QUESTION 9: **Are there any research areas you would like to see covered at future research network forums?**

20 comments

Suggested area	No. suggestions	Specific ideas
Research into practice/ best practice	4	Research into practice / implementation science; 'Best practice' in evaluation studies around social programs; Benchmarking in the NGO / CMO sector; Implementation science!
Research methods	4	Qualitative research methods - various. Getting funding for research how to find the appropriate partner; Developing partnerships between NGOs and universities for the purposes of community research; Advocacy/ processes to engage with Govt around their own accountability with research and reciprocity in data collection
Ethics related	5	Probing questions of 'what are ethics'; More on ethics, services and evaluation; Steps to go through to get ready for an ethics committee; Ethics in practice – boundaries; How to collaborate with other NGOs to establish an ethics committee
Evaluation	3	Evaluation; Ev. Processes; "lessons from program evaluations' (techniques, management of consultants/academic)
General	4	Research on networks in NSW and how NGOs can take advantage of shared research; Research on HR value based recruitment

QUESTION 10 **How might you change your work practices, following this forum?**

25 Comments

Area of change	No. suggestions	Specific ideas examples
Consider ethical processes in organisation	13	Continue to establish process with greater certainty of what is required; Establish framework for ethics approval for evaluation and monitoring process, not just for research project; Embedding formal ethical review (whether through individual reflection service committee or NHMRC submission) across service practice, including quality improvement initiatives; More reflective practice. Ethics back on the agenda; Proceed with moves to set up ethics committee for our organisation. More actively engage consumers in research design and conducting the research. Build communication of research results to those in the community who participated in the research; Review National Standards; there will be an explicit discussion about ethics (instead of implied) at the initiation of all projects
Consumer related	4	Explore potential for our own organisational evaluation framework; Advocate for more peer workers; Deeper thinking on how to better engage with clients to identify and formulate research questions, appropriate methods and interpretation; It builds on the consumer participation forum; Client evaluations - methods aren't sound
General	8	Advocacy to NHMRC re: MH content - National Standards; Seek some ideas/mentoring directly from individuals who spoke on areas specifically relevant to my work; Looking at strategic review of research for organisation wide practice; Look at furthering our research process internally; Network with other organisations who have the same dilemmas