**Online Focus Group Participant Information Sheet**

**Date**:

15 January 2024

**Research Project Title:**

Exploring the role of Alcoholics Anonymous in Alcohol Use Disorder Treatment in New Zealand

**An Introduction and invitation**

Kia Ora,

My name is Bonny Mathe Helms, and I am a PhD student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). I am conducting this research as part of my Doctor of Philosophy qualification.

I want to invite you to take part in my research by participating in an Online Focus Group to express your views about Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) in treatment or recovery from problematic alcohol use. I am conducting this research with my PhD supervisors, Associate Professor Maria Bellringer and Dr Wendy Wrapson, both of AUT.

Additionally, it is important to inform you that I am a retired provider of addiction and mental health treatment from California, USA, and a person in longterm addiction recovery. I immigrated to New Zealand after retirement to pursue research in March 2019.

Before you decide whether to take part, it is important that you understand what this study is about and what is involved for you. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Feel free to talk to others about this study if you wish. Please ask me or my supervisors (see our contact information below) if you have any questions or need more information.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

The focus of this research to investigate what individuals who have been through treatment for their alcohol use in New Zealand think about Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and its usefulness in their recovery goals.

The findings of this research may be used for the completion of my PhD and other academic publications and presentations,

**How was I identified to take part in the study?**

You are invited to participate in this research because you have responded to my Facebook research invitation, or a posted invitation from an alcohol treatment service, or you received information about this research from someone who thought you might be interested in it.

If you would like to participate you must be:

* 18 years old or older
* Have completed some form of professional treatment for problems with alcohol use in New Zealand.
* Familiar at some level with A.A. in New Zealand

You may not participate if:

* Your alcohol use treatment was only outside of New Zealand
* You only are familiar with A.A. from another country.
* You are a member of one of my 12-Step meetings.

**How do I agree to participate in an Online Focus Group ?**

After reading this Participant Information Sheet, please complete the Consent form that was also attached to the email containing this information sheet. You can either electronically sign the consent form and send it back to me via email. OR, if you prefer, you can print it out to complete and sign it and send a scan of the consent form back to me via email. Please let me know if you need assistance to accomplish this and I will guide you through the process.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

**How do I participate in an online focus group?**

The Online Focus Groups will have 5-6 participants each and take place via Zoom. I will contact you to arrange the day and times best suited to you. If you need any assistance in managing attending a Zoom meeting, technical instructions on how to join the Online Focus Group will be sent to you. Additionally, you will be sent the “ground rules” for how to participate in the Online Focus Group . If further assistance is needed, I will gladly schedule a zoom tutorial meeting with you prior to your scheduled group.

**What will happen in my Online Focus Group ?**

You and your fellow participants will be sharing your views, perceptions and opinions regarding A.A. The Online Focus Group will involve me introducing myself as the facilitator and my technical assistant who will be assisting you and myself with the technical aspects of the Zoom platform.

It is estimated that the Online Focus Group will take up to 60 minutes. The first 5-10 minutes will be spent on going over how the group will work, the group ground rules, and answering any questions you may have. Everyone will have received this information and details about how your Online Focus Group works a few days before your group meets. You will have the opportunity to discuss with me any concerns or questions you might have one-on-one prior to the Online Focus Group .

**Will the focus group be recorded?**

The focus group will be both audio and video recorded with your consent using Zoom’s recording feature. Notes will also be taken using an AI app imbedded in the Zoom platform. The recording will be used to create a written transcript of the group discussion which I will analyse as part of my research. I will transfer the video recording to a password-protected file on my laptop and delete it from the recording device once the transcripts are finalised.

**What are the risks or discomforts of taking part in this study and how will they be addressed?**

During the focus group discussion, you may feel emotional or uncomfortable talking about your experiences. You may also feel relief sharing with your peers. How much you share is entirely up to you. You can stop sharing at any time. You can choose to keep your camera off if this feels more comfortable.

In the event that a) your schedule does not accommodate the Online Focus Group schedule or b) you decide not to participate in the Online Focus Group, you can choose to do an online interview.

In the event that you need further support after the focus group, as a participant in this study, you are entitled to three (3) free confidential counselling sessions viathe **AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing Centre**. Please note that these sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in this research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

* Drop into our centres at
  + WB219 AUT City Campus or phone 921 9992 or
  + AS104 AUT North Shore campus or phone 921 9998
  + Appointments for South Campus can be made by calling 921 9992.

Please let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and then provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet.

Other support resources are listed at the end of this sheet.

**What are the benefits of being involved?**

* You will be assisting me in gaining a PhD qualification.
* You will have the opportunity to openly express your perspectives and opinions with your peers.
* Your participation may give you some satisfaction by knowing your contribution could make a difference for others with AUD in NZ.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

You and your fellow Online Focus Group participants sign your informed Consent agreement in which you agree to hold each other’s contributions in confidence, to keep each other’s identity confidential, and to share no information outside of the Online Focus Group. You will have the option on how to identify yourself in the group. You can turn your camera off during the focus group session, if you feel more comfortable doing so.

Your contact details will not be shared with any of the other participants. The transcripts of your Online Focus Group will not contain any identifiable information and once transcribed, the video portion of the Online Focus Group will be deleted as soon as practical. You will also receive a copy of the transcripts to check over for accuracy. The transcripts and any notes will be stored securely in a password protected file within AUT’s restricted network. They will be destroyed after 6 years.

Any comments made by you that are used in the findings of this research will be discreetly quoted to protect your confidentiality and identity.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

The only cost to you is your time preparing for and participating in the online focus group and your time reviewing the focus group transcripts for accuracy.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

Your will have up to 2 weeks

**Will I receive feedback on the findings of this survey?**

I will provide a 1–2-page summary of findings to each participant.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

* **Primary Researcher**: Bonny Mathe Helms, [nrp8038@autuni.ac.nz](mailto:nrp8038@autuni.ac.nz)
* **Primary Supervisor**: Associate Professor Maria Bellringer, [maria.bellringer@aut.ac.nz](mailto:maria.bellringer@aut.ac.nz),
* 09 921 9666 Ext.7232
* **Secondary Supervisor:** Dr. Wendy Wrapson, [wwrapson@aut.ac.nz](mailto:wwrapson@aut.ac.nz) 09 921 9999 Ext. 6136

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, [*ethics@aut.ac.nz*](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)*(+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.*

**Other help resources**:

If you need to talk to someone in about your distress, the following services are available

* Alcohol and Drug Helpline is open 24/7- 0800 787 797 <https://alcoholdrughelp.org.nz/> or text 8681
* Healthpoint: <https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/>. Can direct you to a service in your area
* [Alcohol.org.nz](https://www.alcohol.org.nz/) : Amora te Waiora-Help and resources aimed breaking the cycle of alcohol harm in Aotearoa.
* Community Alcohol & Drug Services (CADS) support for alcohol treatment across NZ <https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/search?q=community+alcohol+and+drug+services>

*This project has been approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on dd/mm/yyyy AUTEC Reference number yy/abc.*