



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

HREC Project Number:	HRE2024-0547
Project Title:	Exploring Perceived Mental Health–Diet Relationships and Co-Designing a Prototype Resource for People with Multiple Sclerosis
Chief Investigator:	Dr Rebecca Russell
Student researcher:	Georgia Brice
Co-supervisors:	Associate Professor Anthony James, Dr Daniel Rudaizky, Professor Lucinda Black, and Dr Eleanor Dunlop
Version Number:	2
Version Date:	9 th March 2026

What is the Project About?

- We know that people with multiple sclerosis (MS) experience higher rates of anxiety and depression than in the general population. Diet might improve mental health outcomes in people with MS.
- However, existing dietary resources aimed at improving depression and anxiety in MS are not always evidence-based and rarely involve people with MS in resource development and/or evaluation.
- With this project, we aim to develop and evaluate a resource to support healthy food choices and mental health tailored for people with MS.
- We will be asking people with MS to verbalise their thoughts (i.e., “think aloud”) when reading through the resource.
- This research is important as we hope to further develop and improve a mental health and healthy food choices resource for people with MS.
- We will conduct 4 to 6 interviews with people living with MS.

Who is doing the Research?

- The project is being conducted by PhD student Georgia Brice and her supervisors, Dr Rebecca Russell, Associate Professor Anthony James, Dr Daniel Rudaizky, Professor Lucinda Black, and Dr Eleanor Dunlop.
- This research forms part of Georgia Brice’s Doctor of Philosophy candidacy at Curtin University.
- There will be no costs to you, and you will not be paid for participating in this project. You will receive a supermarket store gift voucher as a thank you for your time.

Why am I being asked to take part and what will I have to do?

- You are being asked to participate because you have MS and your insights will be invaluable in the evaluation of a resource to support healthy food choices and mental health.

- Your participation will involve a one-off interview that will last up to 45 minutes. You will be asked to complete a short questionnaire before the interview starts, with some demographic questions, e.g., your age, gender, and how long ago you were diagnosed with MS. This questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.
- Interviews will be held online at a set date and time.
- There will be no costs to you, and you will not be paid for participating in this project. You will receive a supermarket store gift voucher as a thank you for your time.
- We will audio record the interview using a password-protected device so we can concentrate on what you have to say and not distract ourselves with taking notes. After the interviews, we will make a full written copy (transcript) of the recording. The recording will be transcribed verbatim (word-for-word) by student researcher, GB. The transcript will be de-identified, so that you will not be identifiable. The transcript will be checked for accuracy against the audio for any errors. You will have the option to review and revise this transcript to ensure that we have an accurate record of what was discussed. The audio files and transcripts will be securely stored in accordance with Curtin University's data storage policies.
 - Optional Consent Future Research: We would like you to consider allowing us to send you information about future research projects. Once you receive the information, it is your choice if you decide to take part or not.
 - Optional Consent: We would like you to consider letting us share the information we collect during this research with other researchers working in this area. This information will be de-identified, then re-identifiable, meaning your name will be changed.

Are there any benefits to being in the research project?

- There may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this research, but people sometimes appreciate the opportunity to share their opinions.
- We hope the results of this research will allow us to:
 - Further improve a resource to support healthy food choices and mental health in people with MS.

Are there any risks, side-effects, discomforts or inconveniences from being in the research project?

- We have been careful to make sure that the questions in the interviews do not cause you any distress. But if you feel anxious about any of the questions you do not need to answer them. If the questions cause any concerns or upset you, we can refer you to a counsellor in the MSWA counselling team or you can contact Beyond Blue on 1300 22 4636 or Lifeline on 13 11 14. You are also free to leave the interview at any time without providing us with a reason.
- Apart from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or inconveniences associated with taking part in this study.

Who will have access to my information?

- The information collected in this research will be re-identifiable (coded). This means that we will collect data that can identify you but will then remove identifying information on any data or sample and replace it with a code when we analyse the data. Any information we collect will be treated as confidential and used only in this project unless otherwise specified. The following people will have access to the information we collect in this research: the research team and, in the

event of an audit or investigation, staff from the Curtin University Office of Research and Development.

- Electronic data will be password-protected and hard copy data will be in locked storage.
- The information we collect in this study will be kept under secure conditions at Curtin University for 7 years after the research is published and then it will be destroyed.
- The results of this research may be presented at conferences or published in professional journals. You will not be identified in any results that are published or presented.

Will you tell me the results of the research?

- If you are interested in obtaining a summary of the main findings, please contact the researchers 6 months after you have completed your interviews. Results will not be individual but based on all the information we collect and review as part of the research.

Do I have to take part in the research project?

- Taking part in a research project is voluntary. It is your choice to take part or not. You do not have to agree if you do not want to. If you decide to take part and then change your mind, that is okay, you can withdraw from the project. If you choose not to take part or start and then stop the study, it will not affect your relationship with the University.
- You are free to withdraw from the study prior to approving your transcript.
- If you choose to withdraw, we will retain and use any data collected up to that point unless you ask us to delete it.

What happens next and who can I contact about the research?

- You can contact Dr Rebecca Russell at MSNutritionResearch@curtin.edu.au or (08) 9266 3160 to obtain further information or answer questions.
- If you decide to take part in this research, we will ask you to sign the consent form. By signing it is telling us that you understand what you have read and what has been discussed. Signing the consent indicates that you agree to be in the research project and have your health information used as described. Please take your time and ask any questions you have before you decide what to do. You will be given a copy of this information and the consent form to keep.

Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has approved this study (HREC number HRE2024-0547). Should you wish to discuss the study with someone not directly involved, in particular, any matters concerning the conduct of the study or your rights as a participant, or you wish to make a confidential complaint, you may contact the Ethics Officer on (08) 9266 9223 or the Manager, Research Integrity on (08) 9266 7093 or email hrec@curtin.edu.au.