

Understanding and Unpacking Debates in Mental Health Science

Request for Quotes (RFQ) to produce a landscape study to understand and unpack debates within the Mental Health Science Field

1. Background and summary

Mental health science is a complex and multidisciplinary field, and one in which fundamental concepts are often steeped in controversy and debate. Whilst constructive debate is critical to the advancement of any scientific field, entrenched and conflicting views about mental health conditions¹—from the diagnostic criteria, terminology, and causes of mental ill health to the appropriate timing and modes of intervention—can pose impediments to progress in mental health research and can constrain the development of a coherent and inclusive mental health science community.

As Wellcome pursues an ambitious agenda in Mental Health to drive a step change in early intervention in anxiety, depression, and psychosis, it is imperative to proactively attend to unresolved debates in mental health science and research that pose the greatest barriers to progress. In line with our objective to create a shared mental health science agenda and foster an inclusive, diverse, and impact-orientated Mental Health Science field, we wish to commission a Supplier to scope, identify and categorise topics and areas of research within anxiety, depression, and psychosis that may be challenging to pursue or where progress is being held back due to areas of contestation and entrenched debates. It is anticipated that this landscaping exercise will help us identify key areas and debates where deeper analysis, engagement and collaboration with relevant stakeholders could facilitate agreement—or at least, managed *disagreement*—that might help research to progress.

2. Scope of the work

The work package will focus on key research topics within Wellcome's Mental Health strategy for which there are currently perceived constraints to progress due to contested concepts, theories, terms, and approaches. In line with the Mental Health strategy, areas of contestation included in this work package will focus on those relevant to early intervention in psychosis, anxiety, and depression.

¹ We recognise that there are a variety of terms to refer to mental ill health as well as specific conditions or mental states. For the purposes of this document, we have adopted “mental health conditions” as a way of being inclusive of perspectives that may not adopt or favour biomedical explanatory models or terminology.

While these conditions are broadly defined (and include OCD, PTSD, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and post-partum psychosis), issues specifically arising in research on other mental health conditions should not be included in this work package (e.g., substance misuse and addiction, eating disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders). Service delivery is also out of scope.

Our provisional criteria for what is in scope for this work are:

- Topics that are actively debated or contested in mental health science.
- Relevant to the Mental Health strategic focus of Wellcome.
- Resolution is challenging, but there is opportunity to promote progress in mental health science.

These work packages should encompass a wide sampling of relevant audiences and sources, such as:

- Medical and non-medical academic disciplines, such as psychiatry, psychology, biology, neuroscience, philosophy, sociology, and history of medicine which focus on the identification, classification, causes, treatments, and care pathways for mental conditions.
- Other understandings and experiences of mental health conditions such as “survivor perspectives” and those with lived experience (recognising that these may well intersect with academic perspectives), service users, support providers and communities, legal practitioners etc.

The expectation is that areas of contestation will be explored through global, multi-cultural, and contextual lenses and frameworks, going beyond more narrow applications of Western approaches. Suppliers will need to outline how this will be achieved within their chosen approach.

The scoping should include attention both to topics within these key areas that are constrained due to current debates and controversies (e.g., appropriate management of onset of psychosis, early diagnosis or risk assessment of MH conditions using biomarkers), as well as the constitutive elements that present areas of contestation (e.g., the diagnostic technique or criteria, understanding of aetiology of the condition, the characteristics of treatment options, impacts on identity and self-determination, etc.).

3. Deliverables and timelines (9 months in total for delivery of all outputs)

1. A methodology to surface and categorise **current**² key debates and areas of contestation within research for anxiety, depression, and psychosis - as they relate to causes, diagnosis, treatments, terminology, and moderating factors like care pathways for service delivery, as well as conceptualisations of mental health conditions. This approach should outline how sources that include engagement, collaboration and input from relevant scientific and mental health practitioner communities, as well as those with lived experience and their support networks have been encompassed into the scoping exercise. Methods may include (but are not limited to):
 - Comprehensive, cross-disciplinary literature reviews from appropriate academic journals, practitioner and patient forums or publications, and grey literature.
 - Social media analysis to surface salient topics within anxiety, depression & psychosis.
 - Qualitative research with mental health researchers, practitioners, lived experience experts.
 - Qualitative research or consultations with mental health research funders to surface perceived constraints as a result of ongoing debates and contested areas.
2. A detailed cataloguing and categorisation of the most salient topics within anxiety, depression and psychosis research that are currently constrained due to areas of contestation. This should include key considerations for prioritisation, such as the level of discord, level of tractability, understanding of the nature of debates, and relevance to research progress in priority areas of the MHCA strategy.
3. A high-level summary document (Word/PDF) of no more than 10 pages. Please note that any publications arising from this project must be in accordance with Wellcome's open access policy.
4. A complimentary visual/interactive representation to communicate findings to internal and external audiences.
5. A workshop with Wellcome staff and Lived Experience Advisors to present findings and facilitate topic selection for further analysis and engagement.

² The "present" focus of this work would complement the History of Ideas and Evidence Synthesis projects.

4. Budget

The budget available for this work is up to £200,000 GBP (which needs to include any VAT requirements – at 20% – if you are based in the UK; if you are not UK-based please allow 20% for reverse VAT charges that Wellcome will have to self-account for). As we are a charity, value for money in a proposal is important to us and will form part of our decision making.

5. Preferred timelines

The work will cover a period of up to nine months, though we are happy to consider shorter timelines. Work will commence as soon as possible, depending on Supplier availability. The Supplier will be expected to meet with members of the Wellcome staff on a regular basis to discuss the progress and direction of their work.

6. Experience required

We are seeking a Supplier that will cover a wide range of areas of contestation and debate across multiple academic disciplines and social domains in which conceptions of early-stage depression, anxiety, and psychosis research, diagnosis and treatment may be variously understood. Thus, suitable Suppliers might include social scientists and researchers with an interest in the mental health field in the broadest sense and with an understanding of the various fields in which mental health science is applied and practiced. While we do not stipulate any formal qualifications, suppliers must demonstrate familiarity with the literature and field of mental health science and practice (including academia; medical settings; charities; social welfare settings, etc), as well as demonstrable engagement skills with diverse audiences. We, therefore, invite quotations from multi-disciplinary teams consisting team members across various career stages and experience. We especially welcome Suppliers who can engage with stakeholders across a wide range of cultural and geographical settings. Suppliers are also expected to work with lived experience experts as part of this project; this can be either on a core team or as collaborators.

7. Detail requested in the quote

Please provide a short (max 2-page) CV outlining relevant skills and experience of the team involved, and a 2-page proposal. This proposal should address the above deliverables, including in addition:

- Details of your chosen scoping and engagement methodology.

- A proposed plan of how you would work with lived experience and other diverse stakeholders in this project across various cultural and geographical contexts
- An outline of your procedure for handling sensitive, controversial, and emotive material as part of this project
- A breakdown of costs, including the estimated time required to complete the deliverables
- An initial proposal for how you will present the findings of this study.
- A list of any questions you have for Wellcome regarding this RFQ

Please note:

- Suppliers submitting proposals as a registered company should review [this document](#).
- Individuals submitting proposals as a sole trader (not registered) should review [this document](#).
- Individuals submitting proposals through their own personal services company should please highlight this to Wellcome.

Embracing diversity and inclusion is fundamental to delivering our mission to improve health, and we are committed to cultivating a fair and healthy environment for the people who work here and those we work with. As we learn more about barriers that disadvantage certain groups from progressing in our workplace, we will remove them. Wellcome takes diversity and inclusion seriously, and we want to partner with Suppliers who share our commitment. We may ask you questions related to D&I as part of our procurement processes

We would be grateful for your response to this RFQ by **Wednesday, 22nd March 2023**. Please send your quote addressing the requested detail to RFP@wellcome.org. Please note, only questions from Suppliers we wish to take forward will be answered.

The single point of contact within this RFQ exercise for all communications is as indicated below:

Name: Olivia Donovan | Role: Procurement Officer | Email: RFP@wellcome.org