



Nature and health care walking side by side to improve health outcomes for Australians

With a mountain of evidence linking nature-based activities with positive health outcomes, a research project lead by Southern Cross University is exploring ways to promote the uptake of nature prescribing in Australia. The research team is developing an innovative *Nature Prescribing Framework* to guide the design and implementation of nature prescription programs and support primary health care teams. The project aims to support greater integration and accessibility of nature prescribing.

The research began by exploring the barriers and facilitators of nature prescribing in Australia through in-depth interviews with professionals involved in nature prescribing, nature-based activities, and related health and community settings. Themes and experiences raised by the interview participants identified essential criteria that enable successful nature prescribing, and these criteria shaped the *Nature Prescribing Framework*. The framework has since undergone assessment through a Delphi consensus survey of experts from fields relevant to the implementation of nature prescribing programs and practices.

The *Nature Prescribing Framework* offers important guidance on areas such as:

- Customisation of nature prescribing programs and activities to the unmet needs of communities and individual patients, with consideration of accessibility and psychosocial factors,
- Development of collaborative partnerships and networks that integrate services, community and nature/nature-based infrastructure, alongside locally tailored resources and referral pathways to support prescribers, and
- Cultivation of awareness amongst the general public and within health care settings about nature prescribing and the relationship between human and environmental health.

Publication of findings from both the interview study and Delphi survey is currently in progress. Planning for future projects to test the framework in collaboration with community members and other stakeholders is also under development, with opportunities to adapt the framework to a diverse range of settings and needs.

The project is being led by Dr Eric Brymer from the SCU Faculty of Health and the MANNA institute, with co-investigators Dr Hope Foley, Associate Professor Matthew Leach, and Honours student Helen Clark, in collaboration with Xiaoqi Feng and Thomas Astell-Burt from the Population Wellbeing and Environment Research Lab at the University of Wollongong.

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