

Minds Matter in Melanoma Care:

Protocol for the MIA Clinical Psychology Service Evaluation Project

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Background

People with melanoma experience high rates of depression, anxiety and distress regardless of melanoma stage.¹

Psychological distress has been associated with:

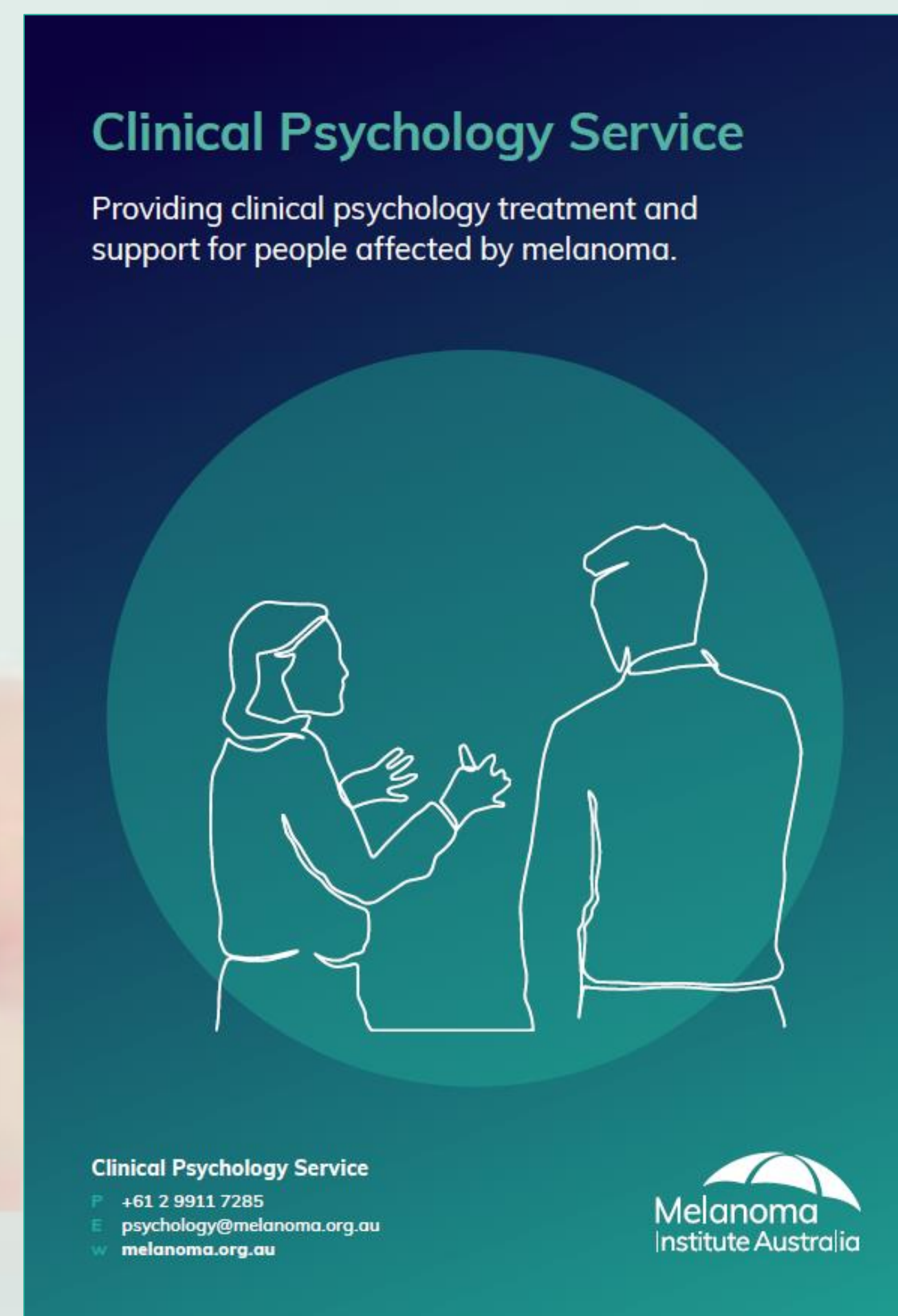
- Lower quality of life
- Delayed help seeking
- Decreased adherence to post-treatment:
 - screening behaviours (skin checks)
 - preventive behaviours (sun protection)
 which may result in increased rates of recurrence and ultimately, mortality.²

Access to psychology services is impeded by staff availability and expertise, service cost, stigma, and patients' competing demands.

To address these barriers, in August 2021 the Melanoma Institute Australia (MIA) developed an integrated Clinical Psychology Service.

The MIA Clinical Psychology Service (CPS) is:

- philanthropically funded,
- staffed by two clinical psychologists,
- able to provide 3 – 5 sessions of tailored psychological intervention, and
- available to MIA melanoma patients free of charge, three days per week.



Aims

The aims of the Clinical Psychology Service Evaluation Project are to:

1. Evaluate the psychosocial outcomes of, and client satisfaction with, the MIA Clinical Psychology Service.
2. Better understand the concerns of melanoma patients and describe service parameters.

Methods

DESIGN: Mixed-methods longitudinal design.

PARTICIPANTS: All people engaging in a course of therapy at the MIA CPS will be invited to participate in the study during the 12-month recruitment period.

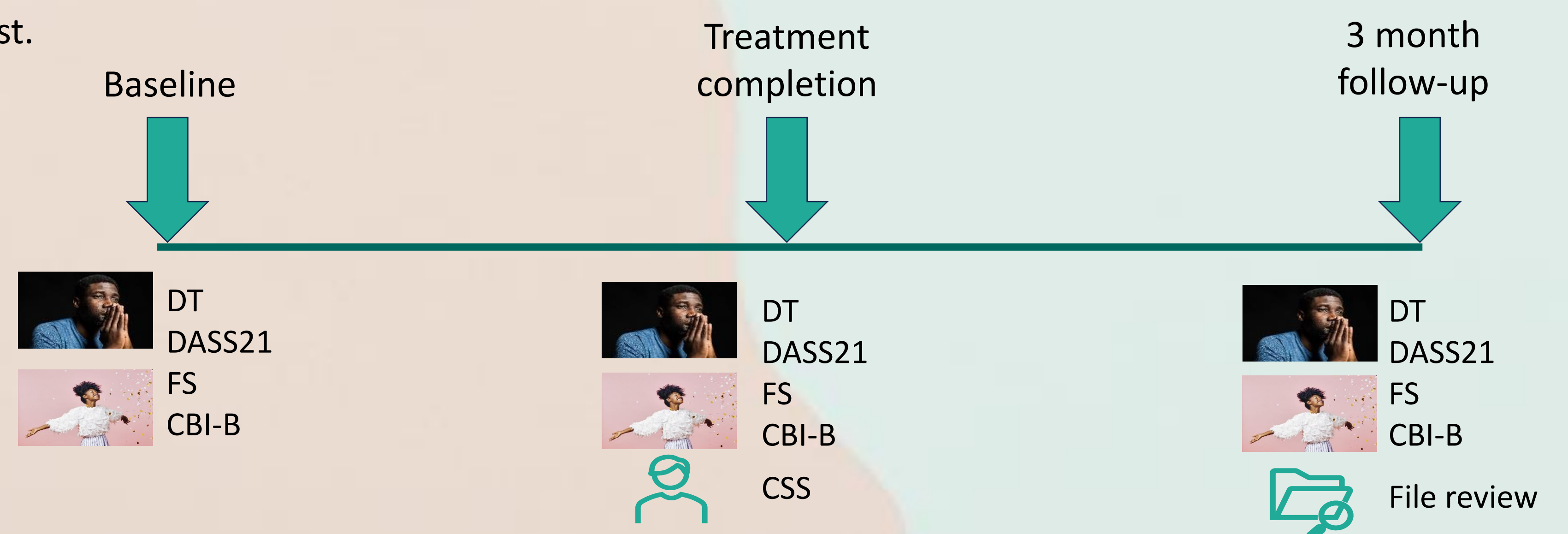
PROCEDURES: Data will be collected via patient surveys at baseline, treatment completion and three-month follow up. Service parameter data will be accessed from the clinical file by the treating clinical psychologist.

PSYCHOSOCIAL OUTCOME MEASURES:

- Distress Thermometer (DT)
- Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS21)
- Flourishing Scale (FS)
- Cancer Behaviour Inventory – Brief (CBI-B)
- Client Satisfaction Survey (CSS)

SERVICE PARAMETER DATA: referral source, presenting concerns, number and modality of sessions attended, therapeutic interventions utilised, number of days between referral, sessions and discharge, and any ongoing support needs.

DATA ANALYSIS: All statistical analyses will be conducted in SPSS*. Qualitative data from the open-ended questions on the CSS will be analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach.



Results

Since its inception in August 2021, the MIA Clinical Psychology Service has received 543 referrals and delivered 1133 psychotherapy sessions.

The MIA Clinical Psychology Service Evaluation Project was launched in July 2025 and is currently recruiting participants.

To date:

- 89% of eligible participants invited into the study have consented to participate (n = 8). Only one person has declined due to competing demands. Based on the anticipated participation rate of 80% we expect to have a sample size of 80 at the end of the 12-month period.

Significance

To our knowledge, this will be the first study to evaluate a specialised melanoma psycho-oncology service.

It will establish an evidence base for the MIA Clinical Psychology Service.

It will inform service improvement activities and inform other psycho-oncology services that are being developed.

REFERENCES

1. Kasparian NA, Mcloone JK, Butow PN. Psychological Responses and Coping Strategies Among Patients With Malignant Melanoma. A systematic review of the literature. Arch Dermatol. 2009; 145(12): 1415–27.
 2. Kasparian NA. Psychological stress and melanoma: are we meeting our patients' psychological needs? Clin Dermatol. 2013; 31(1):41–6.
- * Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS)

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