

Tools to improve health outcomes in people experiencing homelessness

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Appropriate and acceptable health checks for people experiencing homelessness can help reduce long-term physical and mental stresses, a new study shows.

Regular [health assessment](#) tools that measure health and well-being were tested on a group of 53 South Australian people experiencing homelessness by experts from Flinders University and University of Adelaide.

The results help to highlight health care priorities, including [preventative measures](#) for this vulnerable group, their study says in *BMC Public Health*.

"There are few health assessment tools that have been developed with people experiencing homelessness," says Professor Gordon, from the Caring Futures Institute at Flinders University.

"We conducted the trial to understand what would help them feel comfortable with gaining health support. These methods determined which tools and assessments were most appropriate and acceptable in their circumstances.

"In general, the assessments were accepted but reversal of consent did occur and there were some barriers to complete questionnaires about stress, sleep and cognition, and undertake oral examination and balance and walking tests.

"It was clear that development of trust and maintenance of control via informed consent is essential in wider use of these methods."

The study, supported by First Nations-led organization Common Ground, provides new information for service providers to reach out to people experiencing homelessness who may not be inclined or be able to seek regular advice or diagnosis for new or chronic health conditions.

Nicky Baker, a co-author on the paper, says it's vital to minimize the burden on participants. Data collected from health assessments can go

further by informing and improving [health services](#) and policy.

"Understanding the health and social needs of vulnerable people experiencing homelessness is essential to underpin evidence-informed policy," she says.

Further studies will refine the best health assessment models to suit a range of health professionals in supported accommodation and other settings to assist the most [vulnerable groups](#) in the community.

More information: Susan Jayne Gordon et al, Appropriate and acceptable health assessments for people experiencing homelessness, *BMC Public Health* (2022). [DOI: 10.1186/s12889-022-13723-7](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13723-7)

Provided by Flinders University

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