



Plain Language Statement

Centre for Health Equity
 Melbourne School of Population and Global Health
 Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences



Project: Let's talk labia! How do young women with genital appearance concerns understand and make decisions about their labial or genital appearance and possible surgery?

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research project. The following few pages will provide you with further information about the project, so that you can decide if you would like to take part in this research.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. You may ask questions about anything you don't understand or want to know more about.

Your participation is voluntary. If you don't wish to take part, you don't have to. If you begin participating, you can also stop at any time.

What is this research about?

This study involves interviewing young women currently aged 18 – 29 years old, who have previously consulted a health professional (gynaecologist, GP, surgeon, etc.) when they were aged between 13 - 19 years old about labial or genital appearance and/or possible surgery.

This project will also seek to interview some mothers (or female guardians) of these women about the same topic.

I am conducting this study because increasingly young women are seeking medical consultations about labial or genital appearance and possible surgery, yet there is very little existing research about the reasons why women are considering these procedures.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to take part in this study. Participation involves a one-on-one interview with the principal investigator (Emma). The interview will take up to one hour. I will ask you a range of questions including:

- Background questions such as your age, living arrangements, education level, relationship status
- How you sought an appointment with a health professional for concerns about labial or genital appearance and possible surgery
- Questions specific to before and after your consultation with a health professional about genital or labial appearance and possible surgery
- Health knowledge and health seeking behaviours
- General views about health and wellbeing
- Lifestyle, social interests and use of media
- Views about appearance and body image

The interview will take place in an agreed place that is comfortable, safe and private. This could be at The University of Melbourne, your home, or somewhere else. If you live in a regional or remote area, it is possible to conduct an interview over the phone or using Skype. With your permission, I will audio record the interview as well as take notes.

What are the possible benefits?

There is unlikely to be any direct benefit to you from this study. However, you may appreciate the chance to discuss your feelings about this issue. I hope that this study will help other researchers and clinicians understand more about how young women understand and make decisions about genital cosmetic surgery and help to inform care and treatment for young women.

What are the possible risks?

The questions in the interview are of a personal nature and are not intended to cause any distress or embarrassment. However, if you feel uncomfortable or upset about any of the questions then you do not need to answer them. Sometimes participating in an interview can occasionally bring up issues. If this happens I can give you more information about contacting someone who is not involved with this study to talk to.

Please note, if you disclose thoughts or feelings about harm to yourself or others during the interview, I will need to inform and discuss this with Professor Sonia Grover as part of our duty of care to you.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether you participate in this research or not. If you decide to take part, you have the right to withdraw at any stage without giving a reason. If at first you decide to take part in the study and then want to withdraw you are free to do so. We will remove any data from the project related to you and destroy it.

Will I hear about the results of this project?

At the end of the study, results will form the basis of my PhD thesis and may be presented at conferences or published in academic medical journals. In any report or presentation individuals will be referred to by a pseudonym (not a real name). Information that could reveal your identity will be removed. The number of participants in this study is small, so I cannot absolutely guarantee that you will not be recognised, for example by a clinician who may have treated you. However, I will take the greatest care for this not to happen.

Once the study is completed a summary of the findings will be sent to you.

What will happen to information about me?

In this study we will collect information for research purposes. Any information we collect that can identify you will be treated as confidential and used only in this project unless otherwise specified. We can disclose the information only with your permission, except as required by law.

All information will be stored securely in the Centre for Health Equity at The University of Melbourne. Paper files will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Electronic files will be stored in password-protected files on a computer that is maintained and backed-up on a University of Melbourne server.

The following people may access information collected as part of this research project:

- the research team involved with this project
- The University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee

The stored information will be re-identifiable. This means that we will remove identifying information such as your name and give the information a special code number. Only the research team can match your name to your code number, if it is necessary to do so.

Information collected in this research will be kept for at least 5 years. The research information may be destroyed or kept indefinitely in secure storage after this time.

In accordance with relevant Australian and/or Victorian privacy and other relevant laws, you have the right to access and correct the information we collect and store about you. Please contact us if you would like to access this information.

Where can I get further information?

If you would like to participate, please contact Emma via phone on 0490 324 938 or email barnarde@student.unimelb.edu.au to arrange a convenient time to complete an interview. When we meet for the interview, I will review the consent form with you and provide you with a copy for your records.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Office for Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or E: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au.

All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project.