Case Studies

# Chapter 12: The research process

Case study student Darren wants to find out whether people diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) report improved care outcomes since the updated NICE guidelines for ME/CFS were published in October 2021. To pose a hypothesis for this research problem, Darren decides to focus on the guidance that: ‘People with ME/CFS should receive individually tailored support focused on personal agreed goals and a range of approaches should be used depending on the patient’s preferences and priorities.’

He poses the following hypothesis:

*‘Patients with a diagnosis of CFS who are supported to agree personal goals and select their own treatment approaches report improved outcomes after three months, compared to patients who are prescribed a specific treatment plan’.\**

Darren conducts a review of existing literature on this subject – of which there is not much, given that the new guidelines are recent to Darren’s study. Next, he devises the research design and methods. Based on the time frame he has and the fact that the NICE guidance draws on patient testimony, Darren decides to undertake qualitative interviews with a study mixed age, ethnicity and gender population of 50 CFS patients – 25 of whom were diagnosed after publication of the new guidance, and 25 of whom were prescribed a treatment plan in the year prior to this. He will test the methodology by carrying out a pilot study with a small sample, before he proceeds to full data collection and analysis.

* Do you think Darren’s hypothesis is either too broad or too narrow? Why?
* What would be the reasons for carrying out a pilot study?
* What sort of information would Darren need to include in the following sections of his research report?
* Limitations
* References
* Appendices

\*Reference: <https://www.nice.org.uk/news/article/nice-me-cfs-guideline-outlines-steps-for-better-diagnosis-and-management>