

Evaluation of the Menopause and Mental Wellbeing Webinar

Introduction

Women's health in the South East (WHISE), have been working to understand the experiences of our community members experiencing menopause, and how we, as a Women's Health Service, can help. Through our work in the community, we have noticed the clear link between menopause and changes to mental health and want to give a platform to these conversations. While menopause is a time of biological transition, it also impacts our mental wellbeing. WHISE, in partnership with our presenters – both experts and lived experience speakers- provided tools to assist participants to understand the spectrum of menopausal experience and feel prepared for what's to come.

This webinar was intended for community members experiencing perimenopause, menopause or supporting someone who is experiencing this life stage. Like several other women's health issues, menopause and perimenopause are often underacknowledged. Advocating for ourselves, family members and friends who are experiencing menopause is a powerful way to help close the gendered health gap.

Objectives:

- An understanding of the relationship between menopause, perimenopause, and mental wellbeing.
- Knowledge of the types of assistance, resources and support that are available to you.
- An understanding of how to advocate for yourself in relation to menopause and mental wellbeing in health settings.

Who registered for and attended the session?

A total of 129 participants registered for this webinar, and 35 attended the session, with 27 (77%) attendees completing the pre and post survey. Furthermore, 9 (26%) attendees completed the follow-up survey, therefore please interpret these results with caution. All attendees who completed the pre, post, and follow-up survey identified as women.

Overall ratings of knowledge and understanding

Figures 1 to 5 show that there were changes in understanding and knowledge from pre- to post- to follow-up. The question that asked about their knowledge of the relationship between perimenopause/menopause and mental wellbeing received the highest increase of knowledge, with the

majority of responders selecting *high* to *very high*, with 71% in the post survey compared to 33% in the pre survey (see *figure 1*). However, within the follow-up survey there were slight decreases of knowledge amongst the proportion of people who selected *high* to *very high*, to which 100% of people selected *high* or *very high*. The question that asked about their knowledge of understanding the types of assistance that are available in different settings to support mental wellbeing during perimenopause, received a majority of *high* and *very high* responses (60% in the post survey compared to 19% in the pre survey; see *figure 3*). In the follow-up survey there was a slight decrease in *high* responses, with a the 33% of people compared 56% in the post survey. However, there was a slight increase in *very high* responses, with 22% of people compared 4% in the post survey.

Figure 2 demonstrates the ratings of understanding of protective factors for mental wellbeing during perimenopause and menopause, with a large increase of knowledge from pre to post. This is evident by the majority of participants selecting *high* to *very high*, with 59% in the post survey compared to 22% in the pre survey. In the follow-up survey it was evident that a slight increase of knowledge took place for the questions, with the majority of attendees selecting *high* or *very high* responses.

Furthermore, the question that asked about participants understanding in how to advocate for yourself in healthcare settings during perimenopause and menopause, also received a large increase of knowledge, with the majority of attendees also selecting *high* to *very high* (66% in the post survey compared to 33% in the pre survey; see *figure 5*). In the follow-up survey there was a slight increase in *high* responses, with a the 67% of people compared 44% in the post survey. Similarly, *figure 4* demonstrates the increase of knowledge of the resources that are available to support mental wellbeing during perimenopause and menopause, with the majority of attendees selecting *high* to *very high*. In the follow-up survey there was a slight decrease in *high* and *very high* responses.

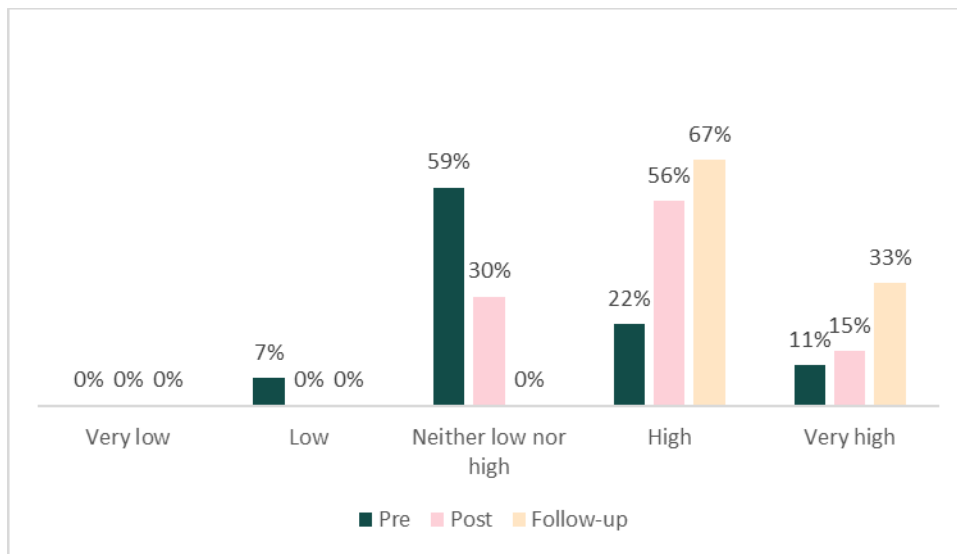


Figure 1. Pre, Post, and follow-up session ratings of understanding of the relationship between perimenopause/menopause and mental wellbeing.

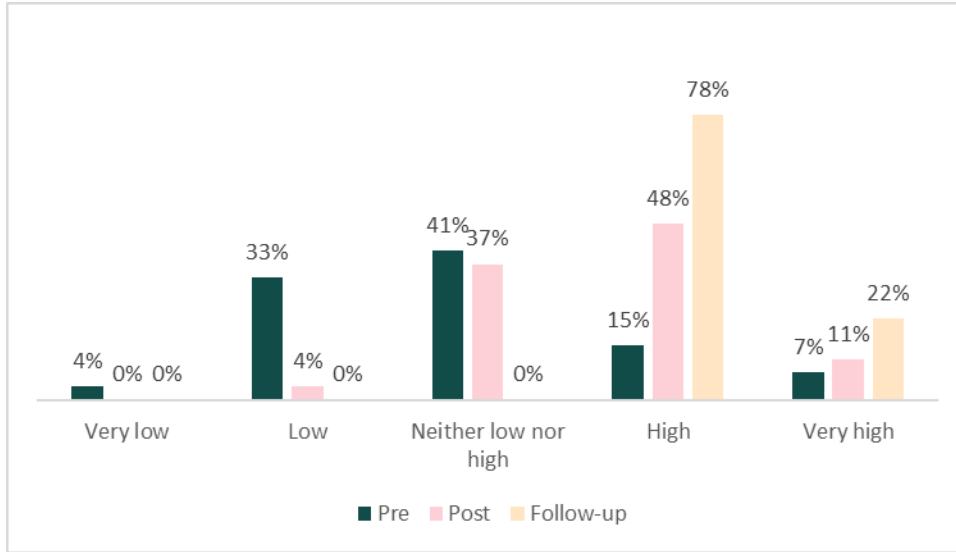


Figure 2. pre, post, and follow-up session ratings of understanding of the protective factors for mental wellbeing during perimenopause and menopause.

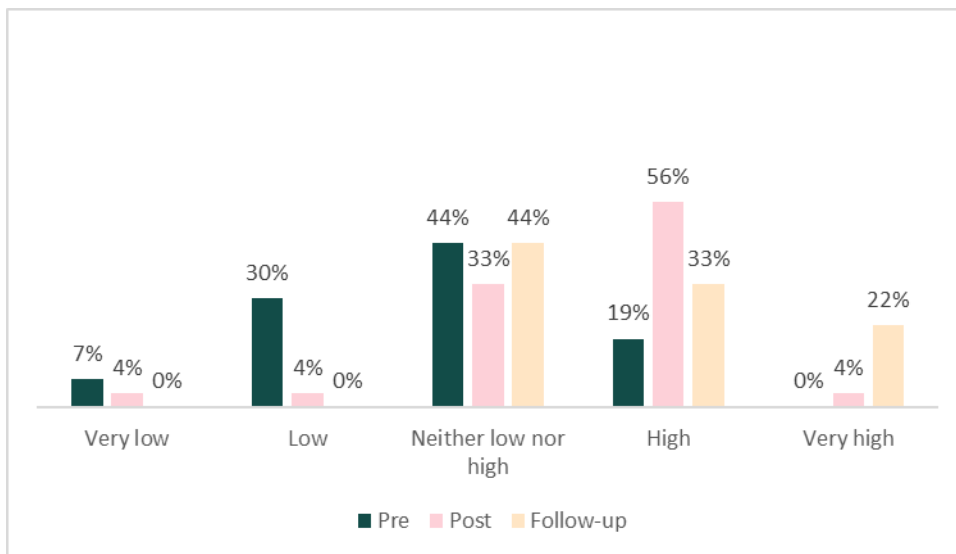


Figure 3. Pre, post, and follow-up session ratings of understanding of the types of assistance that are available in different settings to support mental wellbeing during perimenopause.

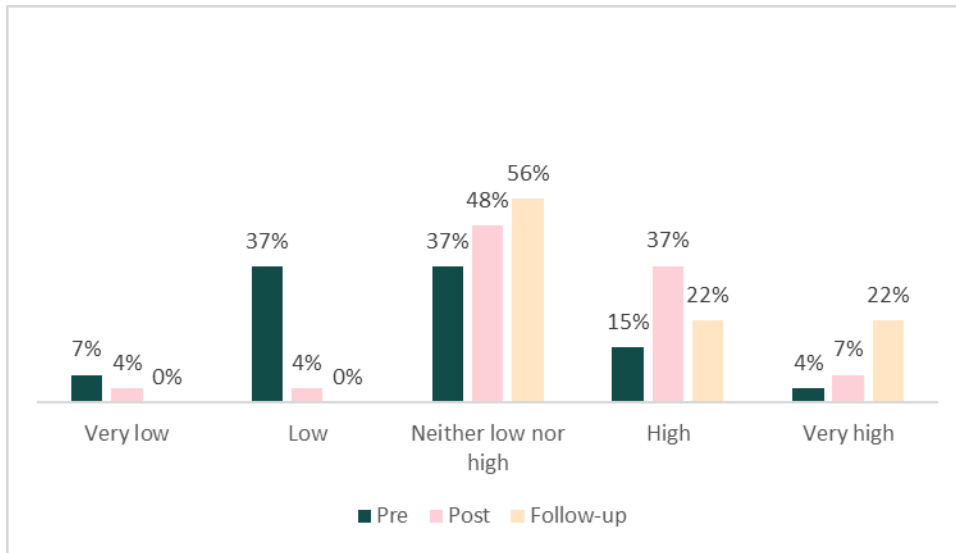


Figure 4. Pre, post, and follow-up session ratings of understanding of the resources that are available to support mental wellbeing during perimenopause and menopause.

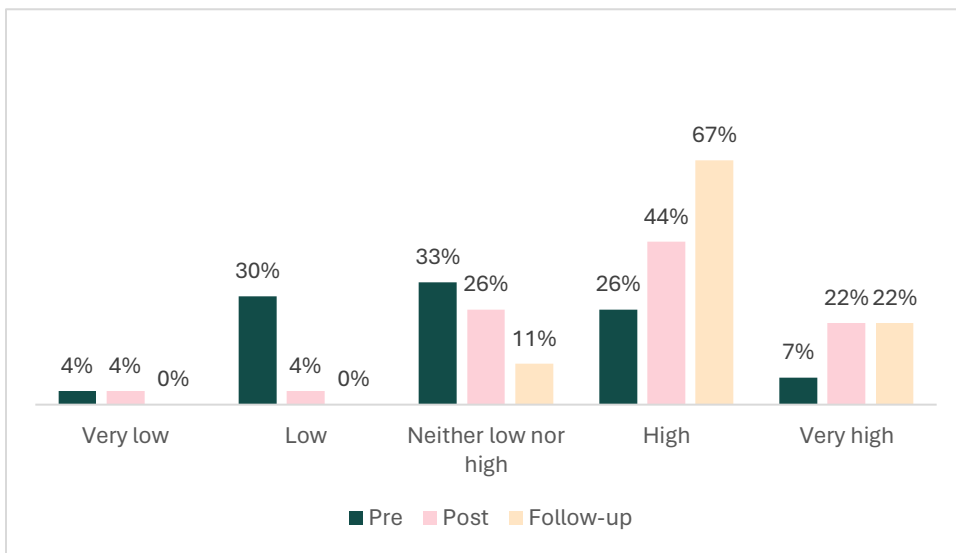


Figure 5. Pre, post, and follow-up session ratings of understanding of how to advocate for yourself in healthcare settings during perimenopause and menopause.

Overall ratings of confidence

Figures 6 to 7 show that there were changes in confidence from pre to post. The question that asked about their confidence in accessing services or assistance (or support someone else to access services/assistance) in different settings received a high increase of confidence, with the majority of responders selecting *confident* to *very confident*. This is evident with 44% of participants in the post survey compared to 30% in the pre survey, demonstrating a 47% increase of confidence (see *figure 6*). Similarly, the question that asked about their confidence in advocating for themselves in healthcare settings during perimenopause and menopause, received a majority of *confident* and *very confident*

responses. This is evident with 56% of participants in the post survey compared to 30% in the pre survey, demonstrating an 87% increase of confidence (see *figure 7*). In the follow-up survey there has been slight increases in *confident* responses for both questions, whereas there has been slight decrease in *very confident* responses demonstrated in *figure 7*. *Figure 6* demonstrates, how responses migrated from *not so confident* to *fairly confident*, despite *confident* responses remaining the same.

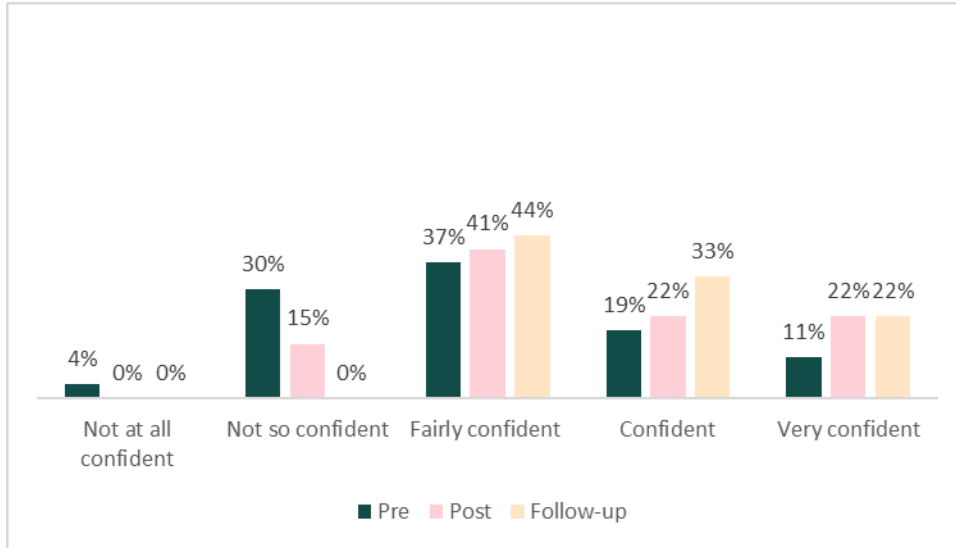


Figure 6. Pre, post, and follow-up session ratings of confidence in accessing services or assistance (or support someone else to access services/assistance) in different settings.

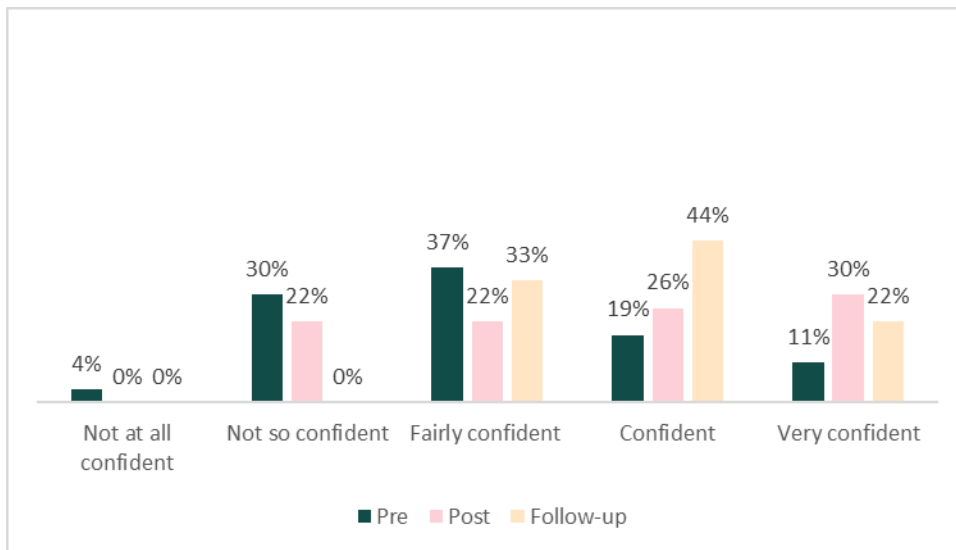


Figure 7. Figure 6. Pre, post, and follow-up session ratings of confidence in advocating for yourself in healthcare settings during perimenopause and menopause.

Indicator framework

Figures 9 to 10 demonstrate the indicator framework questions. These questions were only asked in the post survey, therefore xx% of participants answered this question. These questions asked participants about their confidence level before and after session. Figure 8 asked the question about their confidence in applying knowledge of women's sexual and reproductive health to take action to improve health and wellbeing. This question received a high increase of confidence, with the majority of responders selecting *confident* to *very confident*. This is evident with 60% of participants in the post survey, compared to 20% in the pre survey. Similarly, the question that asked about their confidence in applying knowledge about how gender affects your health to take action to improve your mental health and wellbeing, received a majority of *confident* and *very confident* responses (73% in the post survey compared to 36% in the pre survey; see figure 3).



Figure 8. Before and after session ratings of confidence in applying knowledge of women's sexual and reproductive health to take action to improve your health and wellbeing.

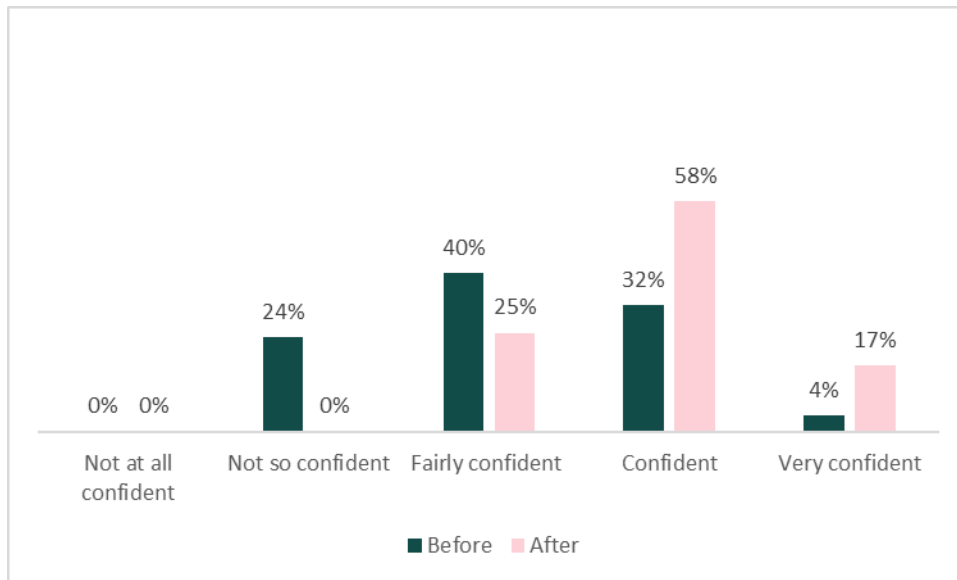


Figure 9. Before and after session ratings of confidence in applying knowledge about how gender affects your health to take action to improve your mental health and wellbeing.

Key learnings from the webinar

Of the 27 people who answered the quantitative question, 20 people (74%) answered this short answer question on key learnings. Four people reported key learnings on content based on symptoms, particularly the variations of symptoms that women experience. For instance, one person stated, *'the fact that there can be such intense symptoms of menopause but that the overlap with many other conditions.'* Another five respondents spoke specifically about different experiences that women go through, which included symptoms. Comments included:

That everyone experiences different symptoms at differing stages but it's very important to monitor any changes particularly with mental health and other feelings like depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts and to reach out for help as this can be a very lonely journey and often not one people close to you who haven't gone through it can understand or support.

Different experiences, such as the effect of menopausal transition supports and dietary/supplement approaches.

Three respondents spoke about how a key learning from this session was that help is available, and help seeking is important. Similarly, four people spoke specially about the continued need to learn about menopause and perimenopause. For instance, one person stated, *'I am just about to turn 42 and never really thought I was at this stage, but I am realising I have a number of symptoms which I may now have an answer for.'* Furthermore, five people spoke about the cognitive function of the brain, such as brain fog. Other comments included protective benefits of Menopause Hormonal Therapy, and accepting the experiences of menopause and perimenopause (negative and positive).

Session applications

Of the 27 people who answered the quantitative question, 19 people (56%) answered this short answer question on how they might confidently apply these learnings. One person simply just said 'yes', with one other person saying 'maybe.'

Seven people reported that they now feel more confident seeking help, such as seeking treatment, searching for additional support, and/or making a GP appointment to discuss options. Six attendees spoke about gaining confidence to ask questions at health appointments, and/or engage in conversations about their health. Two people generally spoke about having discussions, whereas some attendees spoke about engaging with health providers. An additional two people spoke about engaging the clients that they work with, while three people spoke about engaging with friends and family. One person stated:

Yes, I plan to speak to women in my life and work about what I have learned, and encourage them to look after themselves, validate their experience and encourage advocating for themselves.

Three attendees wrote about how they already had existing knowledge on the subject, however this session reinforced this knowledge:

I am already an Executive Menopause Coach; I had my knowledge reinforced by such professionals in Australia.

Additional comments or feedback

Of the 27 people who answered the quantitative question, 15 people (63%) answered this short answer question on feedback. By far, most people reported that the facilitators were 'well organised', 'great speakers', and/or 'fabulous', and that the session was 'informative', 'great', and 'supportive.'

Comments included:

Thank you so much. A very informative session. There should be more like these for people and to understand what local support options are available.

Amazing session. Very grateful that sessions like these are offered and held by professionals.

Keep being the fabulous humans you are and doing what you do by helping and supporting women in the community.

Thank you so much for organising the session. It's so important and could save lives. It's really helpful too knowing where you can get help locally.

Three attendees proposed some questions and suggestions for the event organisers:

Do you run any groups for menopause? Although it may be difficult to get there, it would be great to set up some support groups in certain areas. For example, I live in Caulfield. In the UK they have menopause cafes. Because for some reason there is still a stigma about talking about it.

Great session. This needs to be taught from school ages to all the way through life. As a young (ish) woman, 46, who has been fully in menopause for about 3 years now, this would have been helpfully 5, 6, 7 years ago to know. It's not a topic that is generally discussed, even between women until recently because it has been given coverage by celebrities. So well done for putting this together

Well organised - great speakers, however it would have been good if participants could actively ask questions in person rather than via chat.

Additional comments included:

Thank you.

Was a really informative great session with a great variety of speakers. Really good!

Thank you and I am glad to have listened so I can also help other women.

Keep up the great work!

Thank you so much for this very informative and supportive webinar. Well done WHISE team.

Thanks for the great presentation.

Fabulous event. Keep doing this! Thank you!!

Follow-up

Application of knowledge

Of the 27 people who answered the quantitative question, all 7 people answered this short answer question on how they have applied their learnings of this session. One person responded, 'not yet', whereas the other six attendees were more specific. One person said yes; however, they had some previous knowledge on the subject. Another person said they have had conversations with their peers, whereas another attendee said she had run successful health education sessions about menopause to her community.

Three other people said they applied the learning to their own personal life:

Yes, I now have understanding of my body and what it needs and why it is doing the new things it is doing.

I use this information to understand what happens with me. and my body and mind.

I found a new GP and gynaecologist. I've started a treatment of HRT and had a Mirena inserted. My quality of life and mental health have drastically improved. I'm exercising again, my brain fog is gone, and I'm working again.

Of the 27 people who answered the quantitative question, 12 people (58%) answered this short answer question on whether this session has impacted their behaviour or practice in their work. One person simply said 'yes', whereas another person said, 'thank you'. One other person said she has not yet applied any learnings, however she specified that she will in time. One other person said that this

session has impacted her inner self. Other comments focused on specific ways they have applied their leanings, including the sharing of information in community.

comments included:

Yes, I'm advocating to have program that involve this topic to the broader community.

Yes, I have been speaking openly with other women about menopause.

Yes. It made it clear that I needed to find additional help to assist with my peri-menopause symptoms.

Thank you, and I am glad to have listened so I can also help other women.

Three people provided further feedback:

Thank you so much for this very informative and supportive webinar. Well, done WHISE team.

Well organised - great speakers. Would be good if participants could actively ask questions in person rather than via chat. Thanks

Was a really informative and great session, with a great variety of speakers. Really good!

Interview findings

In addition to a follow-up survey, participants were invited to complete a follow-up interview via Zoom. One person completed an interview, and the findings are discussed below. As can be seen, following the webinar, the participant did not necessarily change her practices at work, but this session opened more doors in this area to explore and work in.

- The participant who took part in the follow-up interview had a foundational knowledge about the content presented at the session as she works in his space. She said that she had been attending sessions on this topic for some time as she was interested in expanding her knowledge in this field.
- She spoke about how this session influenced her to partner with WHISE and deliver a free session on menopause for the community with about 200 registrations for that session.
 - The target audience was all women and men of all ages.
 - She spoke about the importance of engaging young people in conversation, so they are aware of their own reproductive cycles. She also spoke about the importance of young (boys and girls) people understanding what their elders, parents, sisters etc... are going through.
- She spoke about how this session has helped her apply the knowledge to her personal growth, but also for my professional growth by assisting in the expansion of how to conceptualise menopause and mental health (i.e. how to also include men in the conversation). This also includes challenging ideas about menopause, and therefore understanding the important to be well rounded in terms in terms of different knowledge in this industry.
- She spoke about how she will use this knowledge during Women's Health Week in September, by creating content to raise awareness about this issue. This session helped to gather ideas and brainstorm of what to do.
- She also spoke about how she feels more comfortable to talk about it with people in the community, stakeholders, and colleagues. For example, during Women's Health Week she specified how she feels confident in delivering content and suggestions on the subject.