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THE GARDA COMMISSIONER EAMONN DOHERTY POLICE RESEARCH PROJECT



**Narratives of drowning
– exploring family and community resilience**



Waterford Institute of Technology
INSTITIÚID TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA PHORT LAIRGE

This is a short small introductory research project exploring a here-to-fore neglected aspect of the world drowning situation. It is a joint project between Waterford Institute of Technology's School of Health Sciences and The Lifesaving Foundation, financially supported by the Doherty Family and the Garda Síochána Retired Members Association. This project will be undertaken by Professor John Wells, Dr Michael Bergin PhD and Dr Suzanne Denieffe PhD from Waterford Institute of Technology and Mr John Connolly from the Lifesaving Foundation.

Most research on drowning focuses on the process of drowning (physiology, immediate consequences and treatment) and the process of rescue (surveillance, training, equipment). Less attention is paid to the impact an incident of drowning has on other significant stakeholders, particularly families and local communities and their support needs at a local level. This is thought to be a particular issue for local police and local volunteer rescuers who are often the first responders to a drowning incident. They work and live in the community of the drowned casualty and often have to support and engage with the immediate family in particular and local community in general subsequent to an incident. As a result they are in a position to provide a unique insight into the medium and long-term issues that may arise and how they are currently dealt with by established agencies and how their services could be improved. As those who drown in rivers are most likely to be local to the area where they died (something to be checked) this research will concentrate on 'river drownings'. The research will take special care not to identify any particular drowning victim or incident. The aim is to seek out general trends.

This research project will focus on 'death by water' in rivers; its impact on families and local communities, and the responses to these impacts from agencies as seen by retired Gardaí who were involved in drowning incidents and volunteer river rescuers drawn from Community Rescue groups. These individuals live in local communities and are therefore sensitive to local issues, while at the same time because of their professional roles are likely to possess a level of objectivity in relation to evaluating what happened, the impacts on families and communities, and what support needs were met or not met.

At the end of the project the objective is to

- Describe the nature of river drowning incidents
- Describe the nature of the involvement of local Gardaí and Community Rescue Boat volunteers when dealing with a typical death by water in a river incident
- Analyse the possible impact of such incidents on families and communities
- Describe and analyse the approaches and nature of the support offered to families and communities
- Develop a 'support matrix' which can be used to better inform policy making in relation to dealing with incidences of 'death by water' to support and improve community resilience and inter-agency care.

The principal data collection method will be one-to-one interviews during the first two weeks of August 2018. Questioning will involve asking interviewees to talk about specific events, rather than providing general opinions, concerning what they recall about those events and their perceptions of what impacted on the individuals and communities involved in them. These interviews will be 'in depth' and last between 45 and 60 minutes. The interviews will be digitally recorded. Each interview recording will be allocated a number for the purpose of identification rather than the interviewee's name. The three WIT medical members of the research team alone will have access to the raw data and no individual or specific event will be identifiable in the draft and final reports. From the interviews a series of general ideas (called propositions) will be generated. A group discussion, with drowning experienced retired Gardaí and members of community groups who were not among those interviewed, will take place to consider the propositions and issues early in September.

I am the first point of contact.

John Connolly
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Narratives of Drowning Project

Appendix 1 Information Leaflet

Background

The World Health Organisation defines the drowning 'as 'the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid.' Within Ireland the last significant attempt to examine Garda involvement in drowning was in 2006 (Connolly 2006). Little to no research has been done on how a drowning incident affects families and the local community. The aim of this project is to explore the impact of incidents of death by drowning on families and communities and the issues that may arise for them and how they are dealt with.

Who will do the Research?

This project will be undertaken by Professor John Wells, Dr Michael Bergin and Dr Suzanne Denieffe from Waterford Institute of Technology and Mr John Connolly from the Lifesaving Foundation.

Why have I been invited possibly to take part?

We are interested in the perspectives of people who are retired Gardaí and volunteer rescuers who have dealt with death by drowning in rivers. Such people often have an intimate knowledge of the families and communities affected and can provide insight in the issues that arise after an incident and what supports were provided or are needed to better deal with the needs of those affected.

What does the research involve?

The research has three parts to it. The first is an analysis of data about drowning incidents that have taken place in Ireland over the last 5 years. The team will look at coroners' returns and public data to examine this. The second part involves a series of face to face personal interviews with people like you. The interviews will last for about 45 to 60 minutes. These interviews will explore particular incidents that were experienced and the challenges that arose and how they were dealt with. They will be in the form of a one to one conversation with a member of the research team. From these interviews a series of general ideas (called propositions) will be generated by the research team looking at the interviews and identifying common themes that link the stories told.

The third part involves a group discussion (lasting between 60 and 90 minutes and with three members of the research team), again with people like you – though these people have not taken part in the one to one interviews – to discuss whether the propositions from the one to one interviews capture all the issues and how they can be improved.

If I choose to take part what would participation involve?

If you agree to a one to one interview it will be organised for your convenience in terms of time and place. It will be in private and take place with either Professor Wells, Dr Bergin or Dr Denieffe. It will be digitally audio-recorded and then analysed along with the other interviews by the research team.

Your data will be treated and stored confidentially and will be held for a period of 5 years under the management of the research team co-ordinator, Professor John Wells on a secure desktop PC in the School of Health Sciences at the Waterford Institute of Technology. Your interview will only be accessed by the research team and no one else subject to the provisions of the law.

The research team may ask you, instead of taking part in a one to one interview, to take part in the group discussion. The group discussion will take place in a convenient location for all the participants. Again it will be digitally recorded. The recording will be treated like that of the recording of the individual interviews in terms of confidentiality and security.

What if I become distressed during the interview?

We recognise that dealing with a death by drowning is distressing for first responders like yourself. We want to assure you that the interview team will try to minimise any distress that the recollection of the events may cause to yourself. However, if you feel the need, the research team will be able to put you in touch with services that can provide support should you feel you need it.

If I change my mind about taking part after the interview has taken place can I withdraw?

The answer to this question is yes. You may withdraw your permission to take part in the interview beforehand. You may withdraw from the research and have your interview data removed from the analysis if you so wish – up to three months after the one to one interview has taken place or one month after the completion of the group discussion. To do this you just contact Professor John Wells.

What will be done with the results of the project?

At the end of the project the results may be published in journals and presented at conferences. You will not be identifiable in any publications or at conferences. However, a non-attributable quote from your interview may be used to illustrate a general point the team may make in a publication.

Narratives of Drowning Project

Appendix 1(a)

Informed Consent Form

1.1. The aim of this project is to explore the impact of incidents of death by drowning on families and communities and the issues that may arise when engaging with such families and communities after the incident.

1.2 In the individual interview participation comprises a conversation with a member of our research team for about 45 to 60 minutes. Participation in group discussion will last between 60 and 90 minutes, with six to eight people, like you, facilitated by three members of our research team. All interviews will be organised for your convenience in terms of time and place.

1.3 The interview and group discussion will be digitally audio-recorded and analysed. Your data will be treated and stored confidentially and will be held for a period of 5 years under the management of the research team co-ordinator, Professor John Wells on a secure desktop PC in the School of Health Sciences at the Waterford Institute of Technology.

1.4 Your interview will only be accessed by the research team and no one else subject to the provisions of the law.

1.5 You may withdraw from the research and have your interview data removed from the analysis if you so wish – up to three months after the face to face interview has taken place or one month after the completion of the group discussion.

1.6 At the end of the project the results may be published in journals and conference presentations but you will not be identifiable in any publications. However, a non-attributable quote from your interview may be used to illustrate a general point in the publication.

By signing below, you agree to the following (1) That you have read and understand the project information leaflet which was provided to you; (2) that questions about your participation in the project have been answered to your satisfaction; (3) that you are taking part in the project voluntarily and (5) that you give your permission for your interview to be audio-recorded, analysed and employed as per the above stipulations **1.1** to **1.6** and in reference to the information leaflet

Interviewee's Name (Printed) _____

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Research team representative Name (Printed) _____

Signature of research team representative _____ Date: _____

(NB. One signed copy to be retained by interviewee and one signed copy to be retained by the research project)