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Project Title: Exploring Nature-based Social Prescribing in Southern Ontario

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This letter explains what the study is about, what participation involves, possible risks and benefits, and your rights as a research participant. You may print/save a copy for your records. If you do not understand something in the letter, please ask one of the investigators before consenting to participate.

Over the years, the growing phenomena of nature-based social prescribing (sometimes referred to as “nature prescriptions, park prescriptions, green prescriptions” has expanded and gained popularity in health services delivery in Canada. A growing body of research suggests that being outdoors can benefit our physical and mental wellbeing, as well as build stronger connections. The rapidly growing field of nature prescribing in Canada requires attention to its program design, implementation, and evaluation to reflect diverse cultural, local perspectives and needs. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to gain insight into how nature-based social prescribing is implemented in Southern Ontario, focusing on the experiences of health professionals like yourself. I believe that because you are actively involved in prescribing time in nature (or the ‘outdoors’), you are best suited to speak to various topics, such as how nature is integrated in your profession, and the perceived challenges and benefits.

Participation in this study is voluntary and we are looking to interview approximately 7-8 professionals who are experts in this field. It will involve an interview of approximately 45-60 minutes in length. “The interview will be conducted over a mutually agreed format, including the option of an online platform, Microsoft Teams. Microsoft Teams has implemented technical, administrative, and physical safeguards to protect the information provided via the Services from loss, misuse, and unauthorized access, disclosure, alteration, or destruction. However, no Internet transmission is ever fully secure or error free.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. If you wish to withdraw your study data after participating, please contact the researchers. You can request your data be removed from the study up until August 31st, 2025, as it is not possible to withdraw your data once papers and publications have been submitted to publishers.

Your identity will be confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used for papers, publications, and digital media such as Storymap. Data collected during this study will be retained for at least 7 years to which only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Board (REB #46800). If you have questions for the Board, contact the Office of Research Ethics, toll-free at 1-833-643-2379 (Canada and USA), 1-519-888-4440, or reb@uwaterloo.ca.

For all other questions or if you would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at tara.chen@uwaterloo.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Susan J. Elliott at 519-888-4567 ext. 41107 or email elliotts@uwaterloo.ca.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to those organizations directly involved in the study, other organizations not directly involved in the study, as well as to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance with this project.

Yours Sincerely,

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