Using Technologies to Promote Mental Health and Wellbeing

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Using Technologies for Mental Health Promotion

• Harnessing the potential of technologies for mental health promotion and prevention

• Young people and online technologies

• Research findings from Bridging the Digital Disconnect project on ‘Using technology to support young people’s mental health’ (NUI Galway, Inspire Ireland, Young and Well CRC, Australia)
Using Technologies for Mental Health Promotion

• Internet and social media -> tools and a ‘virtual setting’ for promoting mental health and wellbeing

• Communication tool
  – source of information and advice
  – source of support
  – enabling connectedness with others
  – creating personal public profiles, e.g. SNSs – self-identity formation

• Setting
  - virtual environment for establishing and maintaining relationships – family, schools, workplace, community, services
  - delivery of online interventions
Using Technologies for Mental Health Promotion

- Build greater understanding of mental health and its importance for health and wellbeing

- Empower and mobilise communities and individuals to shape and initiate their own actions to promote mental health and wellbeing

- Engage with a broader concept of mental health literacy
  - mental health literate individuals, communities, organizations

- Advocate for policies that will create the conditions that promote and protect population mental health
  - reorient policies, sectors and services to action on mental health promotion and prevention
Mental Health Promotion

• Mental health promotion is critical to population health and wellbeing and the social and economic prosperity of society

• Growing international evidence and knowledge base on effective interventions and policies – demonstrating health, social and economic gain

• Scaling up the implementation of effective policies and interventions that will make a critical difference

• Unlocking the potential in other sectors of society and among local communities and families
Mental Health Promotion

• Mental health may be defined as;
  “a state of emotional and social well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can manage the normal stresses of life, can work effectively, and is able to play a role in his or her community” (WHO, 1999)

• Mental health is more than the absence of mental ill-health
Mental Health Promotion

• Concept of positive mental health (Keyes, 2002; Huppert, 2005; Ryff et al., 2006)
  - sense of subjective well-being and life satisfaction
  - positive functioning, engagement, fulfilment and social well-being

• Keyes’ concept of ‘flourishing’

• Focus on enhancing the strengths and competencies of individuals, communities and society
Mental Health Promotion

• Mental health promotion
  – focus on positive mental health and wellbeing across populations
  – building psychological strengths, competencies and resources

• Prevention of mental disorders
  – concern with specific disorders - reducing incidence, prevalence or seriousness of a targeted problem
  – mortality, morbidity and risk behaviours
Strategies for promoting well-being & quality of life

Addressing the Determinants of Mental Health Promotion

• **Strengthening individuals**
  - social, emotional and cognitive resources, identity formation, social relationships, life skills

• **Social networks**
  - social support, exchange, sense of social belonging and inclusion

• **Community level**
  - civic engagement, leisure, membership of clubs, volunteering, neighbourhoods

• **Societal level**
  - structural factors in wider society - education, employment, housing, welfare, services, citizenship, democratic participation
Using Technologies for Mental Health Promotion

• Mental health is created in the settings where people live their lives

• Using technologies to enhance access to resources and opportunities
  – supportive relationships, life skills, education, employment, services, opportunities for social inclusion

  ➢ internet, new media, social network sites
Addressing the Determinants of Mental Health Promotion

• Using technologies to support the development of life skills and social competencies
  – sense of self, control, efficacy and esteem
  – relationship skills
  – coping skills
  – communication
  – emotional literacy
  – problem solving skills

• Sense of connectedness – home, school, workplace community, services

• Online interventions
Using Technologies for Mental Health Promotion

- To harness the potential of online technologies for mental health promotion:
  - address mental health literacy
  - address the issue of digital literacy
Using Technologies for Mental Health Literacy

• Enhancing mental health literacy through effective communication
  – broader than knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders

• Resource for empowering active and informed participation in mental health promotion, prevention and treatment

• Health Literacy is recognised as:
  • key determinant of health - contributor to health inequalities
  • influences health behaviour and health service use
  • impacts on health outcomes and health costs (IOM, 2004; US DHHS, 2010)
Using Technologies to Address Stigma

• Importance of tackling stigma and raising greater public awareness from a public health perspective
  – enable people to engage with mental health in a more positive way

• Stigma and discrimination are identified as the single most important barrier to overcome in the community (WHO, 2001)
  – reduce the likelihood of people contacting the services for help due to fear of being labelled and discriminated
  – reduce the willingness of policymakers to invest in mental health - low priority
Using Technologies for Mental Health Literacy

• “Health literacy is linked to literacy and entails people’s knowledge, motivation and competences to access, understand, appraise and apply health information in order to make judgements and take decisions in everyday life concerning health care, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain or improve quality of life during the life course” (European Health Literacy Consortium, 2012)

• Concept of critical health literacy (Nutbeam, 2000)

- makes the case for investing in strengthening health literacy
- creating health literacy-friendly settings
Using Technologies for Mental Health Literacy

• Using technologies to optimise population mental health literacy

• Mental health literacy is the outcome of individual and social processes – culture and society, health and education systems

• Mental health literacy-friendly organisations
  schools, workplace, community, welfare, health care settings
Using Technologies for Mental Health Promotion

• Building greater public understanding of the importance of positive mental health as a resource for everyday life
  – online communication strategies tailored for different audiences, using appropriate language and media
  - young people – new social media; communities; workplace interventions

• Reorienting health services – other health professionals
  – treatment services – recovery, healing and trauma
  – primary care – integrated mental and physical health

• Advocacy - multisectoral collaboration and partnerships
  – partners in other sectors – education and training, employment, housing, planning, welfare —> mental health literate organizations
Bridging the ‘digital disconnect’ - using technology to support young people’s mental health needs

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Bridging the Digital Disconnect

• Work with parents, teachers, youth workers and social workers, health and mental health professionals to understand their knowledge and use of technology to support young people’s mental health
• Develop online mental health and digital literacy resources to support parents and professionals in their work with young people
• Evaluate the effectiveness of online resources
Bridging the Digital Disconnect

Research Programme

• Systematic review of online mental health promotion and prevention interventions for young people
• Parents’ needs assessment – questionnaire & focus groups
• Needs assessment with health, education and mental health professionals – online questionnaire
• Youth participatory study (young people age 12 -25) – participatory workshops
Online Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Interventions

• Clarke, Kuosmanen & Barry (2013)
  – systematic review of online mental health promotion and prevention interventions for young people (aged 12-25 yrs)
  – 30 studies of 21 web-based interventions (2/3 of studies published since 2009)
  – 10 mental health promotion; 20 prevention interventions

• Moderate to strong evidence that the internet can be an effective medium for the delivery of a range of interventions
  – mental health information
  – interactive programmes - online gaming; mobile phone interventions, structured online modules
  – blogging and online support
  – electronic versions of face-to-face interventions
What's in MoodGYM?

MoodGYM is a free, fun, interactive program consisting of a number of different modules. These are designed to be completed in order. The modules explore issues such as:

- Why you feel the way you do
- Changing the way you think
- Changing ‘warped’ thoughts
- Knowing what makes you upset
- Assertiveness and interpersonal skills training
Outcomes of Online Mental Health Interventions

Mental Health Promotion interventions
- relationship education, web-based stress management, help seeking information

Outcomes:
• mental health literacy – knowledge and skills
• decreased stigma
• support seeking behaviour
• stress management techniques and coping strategies
• positive thinking, problem solving, resilience, satisfaction with life
Outcomes of Online Mental Health Interventions

Prevention interventions

• Focus on prevention of depression and anxiety - dysfunctional thoughts, improve self-esteem & interpersonal relationships, teach life skills – relaxation, problem-solving

• Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (cCBT) interventions, mobile phone depression prevention, blogging intervention, online support/therapy

Outcomes:

• cCBT - improved depression and anxiety, sustained up to 12 months follow up

• Blogging – improved self-esteem, social and emotional difficulties, social behaviour

• Online group support – improved wellbeing and life satisfaction
Outcomes of Online Mental Health Interventions

- No adverse effects reported
- Adherence and drop out rates - some evidence that it is higher for those at higher risk
  - Importance of participant support – online or face-to-face
  - Tailored motivational feedback and weekly reminder emails
- Implemented across various settings - home, school, health service settings
- Gender imbalance in studies reviewed
- Need a greater focus on hard-to-reach groups
Implications

Potential to:
• Reach a much wider range of population groups
• Cost effective approach
• Population wide e-mental health promotion and prevention interventions

Issues to be addressed:
• Digital literacy and the digital disconnect between younger and older population groups
• Critical media literacy skills
• Safe and effective use of technologies
Bridging the Digital Disconnect

- Parents’ views on using technologies to promote young people’s mental health (Clarke et al., 2013)
  - survey and focus groups with parents

- Needs assessment survey of adult stakeholder groups (N=900)
  - SPHE teachers (DES), Guidance Counsellors (IGC)
  - Youth workers (Foróige), Social Workers (IASW)
  - Health Promotion Officers (HSE), Suicide Resource Officers (HSE)
  - GPs (ICGP), Psychologists (PSI & NEPS), Psychiatrists (CPI)
Launch of Report

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Bridging the Digital Disconnect

Needs assessment key findings:
• recognise the importance of technologies in the lives of young people
• address the technology gap between young people and adults
• promotion of positive mental health and resources for working with young people – guidelines, directories
• self help material for young people and the development of parents’ resources
• online safety - trust, reliable information, confidentiality
• combination of online and face-to-face support
Opportunities

• Creating trustworthy online and social media channels
• Online safety - monitor and moderate content
• Tailor channels to audiences
• Shift from universal top-down strategies of informing people to a more citizen-centered approach where official communication engages in social dialogue and builds trust with the public
  – tailored approach to communication
Opportunities

Using technologies to build and strengthen a higher level of population mental health and wellbeing

Expand the focus beyond individual interventions:
• strengthening social capital through the creation and maintenance of social networks
• strengthen active citizenship, social well-being and civil society
• creating supportive environments for mental health – mental health promoting organizations
• tool for advocacy and mobilising change
Opportunities

- Harness technologies to promote a mentally healthy society
- Wider public and cross sectoral engagement concerning the importance of mental wellbeing
- Awareness of how social values, culture, and public policies impact on our mental health and wellbeing
- Advocating for investment in mental health promotion and prevention and critical digital literacy skills