



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh



Using Technologies to Promote Mental Health and Wellbeing

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Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh

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)
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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
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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
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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
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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



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
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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
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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
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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)
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Health Literacy



Health Literacy: The Solid Facts (WHO, 2013)

- 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
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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
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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
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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

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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
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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
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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
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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
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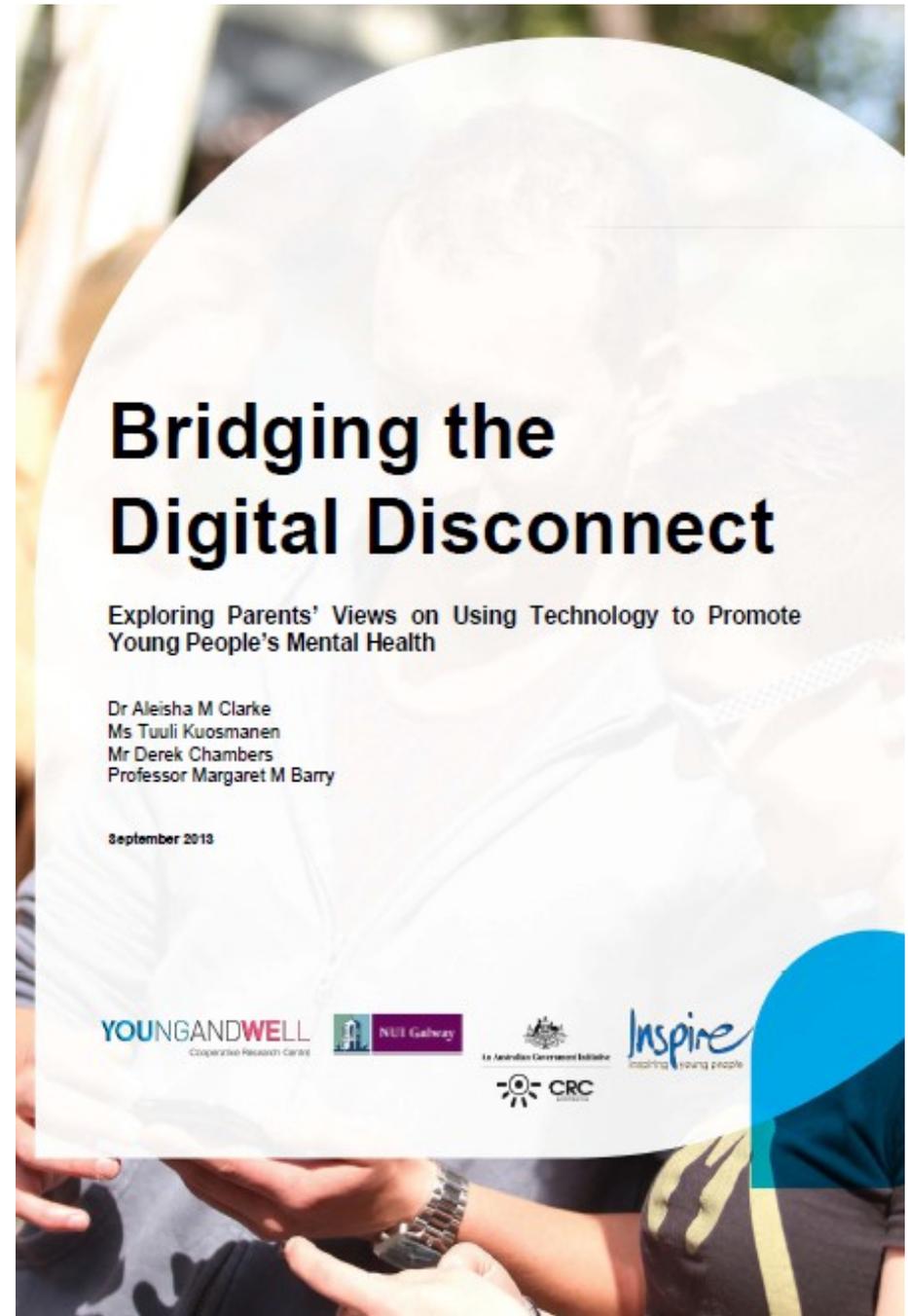
Bridging the Digital Disconnect

- 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
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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
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