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Efficacy of ready4life: a digital addiction prevention program for young people

Submission date
20/10/2020

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
21/10/2020

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
28/11/2022

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[X] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol
Background and study aims
A large proportion of apprentices shows addictive behaviors like cigarette smoking, alcohol-, cannabis- or compulsive internet use. Others do not show these behaviors and develop a low-risk handling of substances due to their resources and life skills. "ready4life" is a mobile phone-based addiction prevention program that takes into account the heterogeneity of adolescent addictive behavior by promoting life skills on the one hand and reducing risk behaviors on the other.
The main objective of the planned study is to test "ready4life" among vocational school students in Switzerland within a controlled trial.

Who can participate?
Vocational school students in Switzerland who own a smartphone

What does the study involve?
Participants of the intervention group will participate in the digital coaching program "ready4life". Based on their risk and resource profile, they can select two out of 6 program modules on stress, social skills, Internet use, tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol. They receive coaching for a period of four months by a conversational agent (chatbot). This virtual coach motivates the participants to deal sensitively with addictive substances, gives feedback on current use and provides information in weekly dialogues. In a separate chat within the app, the participants can pose personal questions to regional addiction prevention experts.
A total of 1,318 study participants will be recruited within vocational schools. A follow up assessment, focusing on the study participant's addictive behaviors, will be conducted in month 6, i.e., 2 months after the end of the program.
Participants of the assessment only control group will receive no intervention.
Participants in both groups will be asked to complete questionnaires relating to substance use, stress symptoms and self-efficacy at the beginning of the study as well as after 6 months.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The possible benefit to participants is that the intervention will improve their life skills and prevent addictive behaviors. There are no known risks to participants taking part in this study.

Where is the study run from?
Swiss Research Institute for Public Health and Addiction (Switzerland)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
August 2020 to December 2022

Who is funding the study?
Research Fund of the Swiss Lung Association (Switzerland)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Severin Haug
severin.haug@isgf.uzh.ch

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr Severin Haug

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6539-5045

Contact details
Konradstrasse 32
Zurich
Switzerland
8005
+41444481174
severin.haug@isgf.uzh.ch

Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)
Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
Nil known

Protocol serial number
Nil known

Study information

Scientific Title
Efficacy of a digital coaching program for addiction prevention among vocational school students: Study protocol of a cluster-randomised controlled trial

Acronym

ready4life

Study objectives
The intervention program will be more effective than assessment only, to prevent the onset and escalation of addictive behaviors (at-risk alcohol use, tobacco use, cannabis use, and problematic Internet use) at 6-months follow-up.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 16/10/2020, Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Zurich (Binzmühlestrasse 14, Box 22, CH-8050 Zürich, Switzerland; +41 44 635 74 70; k. oberauer@psychologie.uzh.ch), ref: 20.10.12

Study design
Interventional two-arm single-blind cluster-randomized controlled trial

Primary study design
Interventional

Study type(s)
Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Prevention of addictive behaviors in students

Interventions
Participants will be cluster-randomised, using school class as a randomisation unit. Due to the heterogeneity of students in the different vocational schools, we will use a separate randomisation list for each school (stratified randomisation). Furthermore, to approximate equality of sample sizes in the study groups, we will use block randomisation with computer-generated randomly permuted blocks of 4 cases. School classes will be randomised into two groups, an intervention and a control group. Research assistants supervising the baseline and follow-up assessments will be blinded to the group allocation of the participants.

Participants in the intervention group will participate in the digital prevention program "ready4life". Within this app-based program, an individual profile is generated on the basis of a survey conducted via smartphone. This profile shows areas in which a participant has sufficient resources and in which there is a need for coaching or counselling. Based on their risk and resource profile, the participants can select two out of the following 6 program modules: stress, social skills, Internet use, tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol. Participants of the intervention group will receive indivdualised coaching for a period of four months by a conversational agent (chatbot). This virtual coach motivates the participants to deal sensitively with addictive substances, gives feedback on current consumption and provides information in weekly dialogues. In a separate chat within the app, the participants can pose personal questions to regional addiction prevention experts. In order to achieve high engagement rates, interactive elements such as quiz questions, contests, and a playful competition are integrated into ready4life.

Participants in the control group will not participate in the intervention program.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
At baseline- and 6-months follow-up, measured by self-report:
A composite measure for addictive behaviors composed of:
1. At risk-drinking in the preceding 30 days, according to guidelines of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health
2. 30-days point prevalence for tobacco/e-cigarette smoking
3. 30-days point prevalence for cannabis use
4. Problematic Internet use assessed by the Compulsive Internet Use Scale, CIUS

Key secondary outcome(s))
At baseline- and 6-months follow-up assessments:
1. General self-efficacy assessed by the Short Scale for Measuring General Self-efficacy Beliefs (ASKU)
2. Stress assessed by a single-item measure of stress symptoms

Completion date
31/12/2022

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Vocational school student
2. Minimum age 15
3. Possession of a smartphone

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Other

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
1351

Key exclusion criteria
Does not meet inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment
01/06/2021

Date of final enrolment

31/05/2022

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Switzerland

Study participating centre
Swiss Reseach Institute for Public Health and Addiction
Konradstrasse 32
Zurich
Switzerland
8005

Sponsor information

Organisation
Swiss Research Institute for Public Health and Addiction

Funder(s)

Funder type
Research organisation

Funder Name
Research Fund of the Swiss Lung Association

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
Data available on request due to restrictions. The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to the Swiss data protection law but are available from the corresponding author (severin.haug@isgf.uzh.ch) on reasonable request. Requests will be reviewed for reasonability and compliance with the study purpose and the participants' informed consent.

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		25/11/2022	28/11/2022	Yes	No
Protocol article		14/12/2020	18/08/2021	Yes	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes