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Uplift website for depression: feasibility study

Submission date
18/05/2016

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
23/05/2016

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
14/06/2023

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

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

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Depression affects people in different ways including feeling hopeless and losing interest in activities. It is one of the most common mental health conditions but available treatments meet just 15% of the need. Many people are on treatment waiting lists, have dropped out of treatment, or do not meet the threshold to access services. This is a problem because without help symptoms of depression can get worse. There is a need for basic treatments that people with symptoms of depression can easily access. This study aims to find out how acceptable and feasible a basic online support tool for people with depression is. The website uses ideas from positive psychology, which suggests that depression can be improved by promoting positive emotions, use of personal strengths and a sense of meaning and connection with others.

Who can participate?
People experiencing depression who are over 18, who can regularly access the internet, who can understand English and who have capacity to consent can take part.

What does the study involve?
This intervention comprises a self-help website, containing activities to promote strengths, positive emotions and social connections for people with depression. The activities in the website are adapted from those used in positive psychotherapy. The website is intended to be accessed independently by people with depression, to support them as and when they need it. It has been designed to complement, not replace, existing provision for common mental health conditions. As such people using the website may also be receiving treatment from their GP or psychiatrist, which may include taking medication or accessing counselling or psychological services. Participants are given access to the website for 6 weeks. When they first access the website participants see the four sections of the website, which contain a total of six discrete interventions; finding strengths, others finding strengths and a strengths plan; good things log; savouring activity; practicing positive communication; saying thanks; and sharing strengths. After being introduced to these exercises, participants are encouraged to select interventions which they feel they want to try. They are encouraged to use the website flexibly, although there is a recommendation that it may be helpful to pick a minimum of one activity to practice per week (on average this will be one hour in total).

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
We expect that the Uplift website will be beneficial to patients as it uses principles of positive

psychology, which evidence suggests reduces depression and improves wellbeing. Study participants will continue to receive treatment as usual and at no point will treatment be compromised. Consequently, no harms or risks are expected from this low-intensity intervention. In order to reimburse participants for their time spent completing questionnaires they will receive a £10 Amazon voucher per questionnaire. Previous research has suggested this level of compensation can increase follow up rates in online studies. A subsample of participants will be invited to an in-person interview to provide more in-depth feedback on the intervention. As this requires a greater burden in terms of travel and participant time participants will be reimbursed £20.

Where is the study run from?
East London NHS Foundation Trust (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
March 2016 to January 2017

Who is funding the study?
East London NHS Foundation Trust (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Sophie Walsh
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Contact information

Type(s)
Public

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
2016_05_18 v1.0

Study information

Scientific Title
Self-help ‘Uplift’ website for depression: a feasibility study of a website using principles of positive psychology for people with symptoms of depression

Study objectives
The overall aim of this study is to assess the feasibility and acceptability of a flexible self-help website using exercises from positive psychotherapy for people with symptoms of depression. The research will use a pre-post study design and collect a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. The study objectives are to:
1. Establish the patterns of use of the website
2. Understand participants’ views on the ease of use and helpfulness of the website
3. Establish if and how personal characteristics of participants are associated with website use
4. Estimate the variability in possible outcome measures (e.g. symptoms of depression, satisfaction with life)
5. Explore potential for change in outcomes

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
North West - Greater Manchester West Research Ethics Committee, 09/06/2016, ref: 16/NW /0447

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Single-centre pre-post study

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Depression

Interventions
This intervention comprises a self-help website, containing six activities to promote strengths, positive emotion and social connections for people with depression. The activities in the website are adapted from those used in positive psychotherapy.

Participants will have access for six weeks and be advised to practice one activity per week, although they are able to use the site flexibly.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)

The feasibility and acceptability of the intervention will be measured by assessing:
1. Number of website log ins (during six weeks of intervention)
2. Number of times data submitted to the website (during six weeks of intervention)
3. Intervention satisfaction, benefits (after six weeks of intervention)

Key secondary outcome(s)
The following outcomes will be measured before the intervention and after 6 weeks of using it in order to assess variability in outcomes and potential for change:
1. Depressive symptoms (PHQ-9) (Kroenke et al., 2001)
2. Life satisfaction (DIALOG) (Priebe et al., 2007)

Completion date
31/01/2017

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Aged over 18 years
2. Have regular access to the internet
3. Have sufficient command of English to complete the measures
4. Endorse one of the Whooley screening items for depression
5. Have capacity to consent

Participant type(s)
Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
This study has no exclusion criteria as the aim is to be as inclusive as possible. A recent review into how exclusion criteria are used in depression treatment research found that studies excluded between 75-85% of people with depression (Halvorson & Humphreys, 2015). This makes it difficult to generalise from research to the typical clinical population and is something the present study wishes to avoid by having an inclusive sample.

Date of first enrolment
01/08/2016

Date of final enrolment

01/12/2016

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
East London NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
9 Alie Street
London
United Kingdom
E1 8DE

Sponsor information

Organisation
East London NHS Foundation Trust (UK)

ROR
https://ror.org/01q0vs094

Funder(s)

Funder type
Hospital/treatment centre

Funder Name
East London NHS Foundation Trust (UK)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
Anonymised study data will be made available on request, subject to data sharing agreement from the lead researcher Sophie Walsh (sophie.walsh@qmul.ac.uk)

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article	results	01/09/2018		Yes	No
HRA research summary			28/06/2023	No	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes