

# Evaluating the effectiveness of "Agoraphobia Free": A novel mobile application for treating Agoraphobia

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| <b>Submission date</b><br>05/02/2016   | <b>Recruitment status</b><br>No longer recruiting             | <input type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered  |
| <b>Registration date</b><br>10/02/2016 | <b>Overall study status</b><br>Completed                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol<br><input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results |
| <b>Last Edited</b><br>28/11/2017       | <b>Condition category</b><br>Mental and Behavioural Disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data   |

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Agoraphobia is a type of anxiety disorder where a person fears being in situations and places where they feel trapped or in danger, often because of openness or crowdedness. Although many believe it is just a fear of open or public places, it is much more complex and usually involves a range of different fears. In general, it can render people unable to function and the condition traps sufferers in a vicious cycle, preventing them from leaving home to seek the support or to attend treatment that might end the condition. Depending on how severe the condition is treatment may require one-to-one therapy in a patient's home and for the person to be escorted around the surrounding area, but this is often expensive and time-consuming. "Agoraphobia Free" is a new therapeutic app which aims to break this cycle by putting the two components of traditional treatment, namely education and exposure therapy (gradually exposing someone to their fear until it no longer scares them), in the hands of the users themselves via their phones or tablets. This study aims to look at the effectiveness of using the app for six weeks on the severity of symptoms in self-reported agoraphobia sufferers.

### Who can participate?

Adults who suffer from agoraphobia.

### What does the study involve?

Participants are randomly allocated to one of two groups. Those in the first group are given access to the "Agoraphobia Free" app, which is designed specifically to help people with agoraphobia, for a total of 12 weeks. The app features game play to make therapy sessions as engaging as possible, exposing users to virtual environments likely to trigger their fears. They are also taught ways of dealing with their fears within the app so that they are no longer as frightening. Those in the second group are given access to a more generalized app called "Stress Free", which is designed to help people with anxiety in general, for a total of 12 weeks. This app involves teaching the user techniques such as calm breathing, relaxation and meditation, designed to lower anxiety levels. At the start of the study and then again after six and 12 weeks, participants in both groups complete a number of questionnaires in order to assess the severity of their agoraphobia symptoms.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants may benefit from an improvement to their feelings of anxiety as well as increased knowledge about their condition. There are no notable risks of taking part in the study.

Where is the study run from?

University of Roehampton (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

September 2014 to April 2015

Who is funding the study?

Nominet Trust (UK)

Who is the main contact?

Dr Elias Tsakanikos

## Contact information

### Type(s)

Scientific

### Contact name

Dr Elias Tsakanikos

### ORCID ID

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### Contact details

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## Additional identifiers

## Study information

### Scientific Title

Clinical effectiveness of a mobile phone application to treat agoraphobia with and without panic disorder (PD) in a community-based sample

### Acronym

Evaluation of Agoraphobia Free

### Study objectives

The aim of this study is to examine whether the agoraphobia-specific mobile intervention ("agoraphobia-free") is more effective than the generic, control intervention ("stress free").

### **Ethics approval required**

Old ethics approval format

### **Ethics approval(s)**

Roehampton University Ethics Committee, 21/05/2014, ref: PSYC 14/ 117

### **Primary study design**

Interventional

### **Study design**

Web-based assessor-blind randomised parallel trial

### **Study type(s)**

Treatment

### **Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Agoraphobia/Agoraphobic anxiety

### **Interventions**

Adults that self-identified with agoraphobia were randomised to the two treatment arms. Block randomisation was applied to ensure equal numbers of participants in each group (ratio 1:1).

Group 1: Participants are given access to the "Agoraphobia Free" app developed by Health e-Living Partnership Ltd. (HeLP) for iOS and Android. The app involves an interactive game-based intervention utilising cognitive-behavioural techniques that target agoraphobia.

Group 2: Participants are given access to a generic stress-reduction application ("Stress Free"), which does not specifically address agoraphobic symptoms. The app aims to help to lower anxiety levels through techniques such as calm breathing, differential deep muscle relaxation, self-hypnosis and meditation

Participants in both groups are given access to the application for a total of 12 weeks, and complete self-reported assessments at baseline, midpoint (6 weeks) and endpoint (12 weeks) of the trial.

### **Intervention Type**

Device

### **Primary outcome(s)**

Severity of agoraphobic and panic symptoms are measured using the Panic and Agoraphobia Scale at baseline, 6 and 12 weeks.

### **Key secondary outcome(s)**

1. Degree of subjective distress experienced because of agoraphobia is measured by using a single item ("How much distress have you experienced because of agoraphobia in the past week?"), which is rated from 1 ("No distress") to 5 ("Extreme distress") at baseline, 6 and 12 weeks

2. Completion of the intervention is measured as 1 (completion of the tasks) or 0 (non-completion of the tasks) at 6 and 12 weeks
3. Engagement with the apps is measured using app usage data (i.e. total number of times that users engaged with the app) at 6 and 12 weeks

**Completion date**

23/04/2015

## Eligibility

**Key inclusion criteria**

1. Aged 18 or above
2. Identify themselves as suffering from agoraphobia
3. Willing and able to provide informed consent to participate

**Participant type(s)**

Patient

**Healthy volunteers allowed**

No

**Age group**

Adult

**Lower age limit**

18 Years

**Sex**

All

**Key exclusion criteria**

1. Inability to give informed consent due to significant cognitive or intellectual impairment
2. No adequate understanding of English as a first language
3. Not having a mobile device than can run the application as designed
4. Any significant disease or disorder which, in the opinion of the Investigators, may either put the person at risk because of participation in the trial.

**Date of first enrolment**

22/09/2014

**Date of final enrolment**

28/04/2015

## Locations

**Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

**Study participating centre**  
**University of Roehampton**  
Whitelands College  
Holybourne Avenue  
London  
United Kingdom  
SW15 4JD

## Sponsor information

**Organisation**  
University of Roehampton

**ROR**  
<https://ror.org/043071f54>

## Funder(s)

**Funder type**  
Charity

**Funder Name**  
Nominet Trust

## Results and Publications

**Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan**

**IPD sharing plan summary**  
Available on request

### Study outputs

| Output type                     | Details | Date created | Date added | Peer reviewed? | Patient-facing? |
|---------------------------------|---------|--------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <a href="#">Results article</a> | Results | 24/11/2017   |            | Yes            | No              |