

### A net improvement for student wellbeing?

A mind-boggling one third of students drop out of university.<sup>1</sup> *Why?* And –importantly, *what* can we, as psychologists, do to support students on their academic journey so that they can successfully reach their destination?

On-site student support services exist to fight this battle, and yet with limited resources they struggle to cope with the high demand.<sup>2</sup> This demand does not even reflect true need. Many students still consider asking for help as a failure in itself, and therefore their needs remain unidentified and thus unmet. Getting help via private routes could be an option, but usually at a cost not affordable for students. Aside from students who face serious drawbacks, a larger proportion of students face mild or moderate difficulties (be it psychological or study skill-related), which keep them from achieving their true academic potential and enjoying the university experience to its fullest.<sup>2</sup>

So *what* can we do? How can we, at an affordable cost, meet the needs of large numbers of students who might be facing difficulties but do not require or may feel stigmatised by formal support?

The Internet might turn out to be a helpful ally here. Web-based psychotherapeutic interventions have been found to be as effective as face-to-face therapy.<sup>3</sup> Why not take this approach and adapt it to the needs of students in higher education institutions (HEI)? If all students could have free access (with charges borne by their universities) to web-based programmes that can identify mild to moderate psychological/study skill difficulties and provide individually tailored support programmes, then HEIs' student support services could use their resources more efficiently. Easy-to-implement, efficient, and cost-effective.

A web-based solution addressing mild to moderate psychological and study skill needs is being developed as you are reading this letter. A proof-of-concept study with approximately 1000 students has been successfully completed and is ready to be published, and a feasibility study will start in September 2015. Anyone interested in finding out more about our endeavour, or wanting to explore opportunities to become part of it, is welcome to contact Dr Patapia Tzotzoli ([Patapia@iconcipro.com](mailto:Patapia@iconcipro.com)).

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1. Loveys, K "Scandal as a third of students drop out of university" Mail Online. 1 April 2011 Daily Mail. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1371989/Scandal-college-dropouts-Record-numbers-students-failing-finish-degrees.html> Accessed 23 August 2013
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3. Barak, A., Hen, L., Boniel-Nissim, M., & Shapira, N. (2008). A Comprehensive Review and a Meta-Analysis of the Effectiveness of Internet-Based Psychotherapeutic Interventions. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 26(2–4):109–160.