

Online psychological support for students

With university student support services struggling to meet demand, are online interventions for students the answer?

Many students face both mental health difficulties and study-skill difficulties. Furthermore, students with poor mental health experience less social contact with their fellow students and faculty, reduced study satisfaction, poor academic achievement and lower graduation rates. Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that more than 8 per cent of undergraduate students drop out in their first year, and more than one in five students fail to complete their studies.

Meanwhile, universities are facing major cuts to their budgets. In the Governmental Spending Review, cuts of up to 40 per cent over four years were announced. This affects a university's financial resources, meaning that on-campus mental health services traditionally offered to students become increasingly economically unsustainable.

There is thus an increasing need for alternative accessible and anonymous services to support higher education (HE) students suffering from psychological and/or academic difficulties. Indeed, the Royal College of Psychiatrists has proposed the use of web-based support, such as interactive computerized cognitive behavioural therapy, for mental wellbeing. Such support is cost-effective, time-saving and highly accessible for time-pressured HE students who usually have limited financial means. Students may also prefer computerised self-help as a means to increase independence and self-reliance, and perceive it as less stigmatising than traditional therapy. Encouragingly, increasing evidence supports the efficacy of web-based interventions for mental health disorders.

iConcipro is developing a web-based solution for students to address their mild to moderate psychological and study-skill needs while in HE. Following a proof-of-concept study with students from five UK universities, iConcipro will soon be conducting a feasibility study and they have just a few exclusive spaces for universities to participate. Should your university be interested in finding out more about our work and the upcoming study, you are welcome to contact Dr Patapia Tzotzoli

(Patapia@iconcipro.com).

Dr Rhianna Goothe,

Research Manager and Editor, iConcipro

Dr Patapia Tzotzoli

Consultant Clinical Psychologist in private practice, and CEO and founder of iConcipro