

Introducing Blue ICE: a self-harm prevention app

Involving hard to reach communities in shaping the design of new behaviour changing technology

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Background

Smartphone technology has become an innovative way of assisting people to self-manage their mental health condition.

A free smartphone kiosk (stand alone) application called “Blue ICE” (‘Blue’ meaning depressed and ‘ICE’ being an acronym for In Case of Emergency) has been developed by Professor Paul Stallard and Bath Research & Development, to enable young people who self-harm to utilise techniques they have learnt in clinical therapy and help prevent further episodes of self-harm.

Methods

After consultation with a local young person’s charity, the smartphone app “Blue ICE” Version 1 was designed to include features suggested by the user group, such as a diary function, feedback mechanism to chart progress and ways to summon help in an emergency.

This application lets users record their mood and feeling and utilise ‘mood lifter’ activities (see Figure 1 & 2). Phones and training were provided for individuals without smartphones.



Figures 1 & 2. Screenshots of the app showing the initial screen and one of the mood checker screens.

Results

A group of young people who are being treated for self-harming and clinical depression in Oxford Mental Health Trust were consulted on the features of V1, with a view to creating V2 based on their feedback.

Overall the group thought the app was easy to use and understand, and they particularly liked that the app had a homepage that navigates to all of the major points easily.

They also liked that the app was bright and the colours were engaging, and that it was very well organised.

The members of the group did suggest changing the wording at the end from “Do you want to harm yourself?” to “Are you feeling that you have to harm yourself?”.

V2 is currently being developed.

Conclusion

Smartphone applications for mental health issues can be developed with the input of users. Hard to reach communities can be involved in shaping the features and design of new behaviour changing technology.

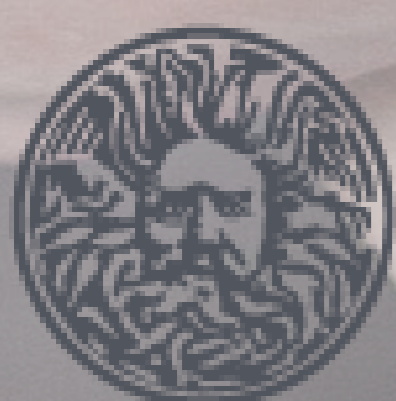
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