

DEVELOPING A MENTAL HEALTH PORTAL

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Background

Third level institutions are not only centres of academic achievement but are also places where students develop personally and socially. The provision of easily accessed, up-to-date, accurate and relevant information about health issues and available services is crucial to better support students and to foster an environment that promotes health on campus. Mental health is fundamental to good health and quality of life. The College Lifestyle and Attitudinal National (CLAN) Survey recommends that priority should be given to mental health promotion. In a large, busy, and complex organisation such as a college, computer-based health initiatives, available to everyone through the campus computer facilities and services, are an obvious route for communication. Computer-based technologies can play an important role, not only through the conveyance of information and health alerts, but also through engaging users in problem solving, identifying personal risk, and developing skills and behaviours.

Research Aims

The Mental Health and Well-Being Portal project aims to develop secure access for third level students across third level institutions to online mental health and well-being information and services. This is a collaborative project between University College Cork, Trinity College, Dublin, National University of Ireland, Galway and Dundalk Institute of Technology.

Methods

There were 2 components to this study.

Scoping Research:

Identify, gather, collate, and evaluate content and best practise literature and licensing agreements of computer-based health initiatives which focus on the promotion of young people's mental health. In addition there was exploration through telephone interview with health professionals in each participating institution to identify the needs and issues in general raised by students.

Formative Evaluation of Portal:

A total of 8 focus groups were carried out, two per institution with students. Participants were recruited through convenience and snowball sampling. Students reviewed the content and presentation of material for the mental health portal from their own perspective.

Progress to Date

This study has been completed and has contributed to the development of a student website, My Mind Matters, which provides information, help, support and advice to college students around a range of topics that can affect mental health and well-being. In some colleges, students can also apply for confidential online one-to-one counselling and other interactive supports.

Dissemination

The website has been officially launched and can be accessed at My Mind Matters (MMM) www.mymindmatters.ie.