

ComBAT: **Community-delivered Behavioural Activation** **Training for Depression in Adolescents**

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“Depression is the third leading cause of illness and disability among adolescents, and suicide is the third leading cause of death in older adolescents (15–19 years). [...] Building life skills in children and adolescents and providing them with psychosocial support in schools and other community settings can help promote good mental health”.
(World Health Organisation - WHO -2018).

Overview of ComBAT

Research programme: 5 years, starting January 2020, NIHR-funded (£2+ million)

Population	Adolescents (12-18 years) with mild-to-moderate depression	Depression key symptoms: 1. low mood/irritability, 2. lack of energy/fatigue, 3. loss of interest or pleasure
Intervention	Behavioural activation (BA)	Engage in purposeful & rewarding activities: 1. pleasure, 2. achievement, 3. meaning
Setting	Community	Supported by professionals in: 1. schools, 2. charities, 3. social care, 4. justice system
Comparator	Usual care	Variably includes: 1. doing nothing, 2. general support, 3. psychological interventions, 4. medication
Outcomes	Symptoms, quality of life, value for money, mechanism of change	Standardised questionnaires: 1. depression scores & categories, 2. functioning, 3. service use, 4. activity levels.

A new concept: “Digital Creativity On Prescription”

- Builds on ComBAT → BA engages young people in purposeful and rewarding activities → some of these activities can be delivered/accessed via digital and interactive media: **e.g. e-sports, storytelling, gaming, music, heritage, design, performance, arts.**
- Existing “prescribing” schemes:
 - **Medical prescribing:** recommended medication, referral to psychological/physical treatments
 - **Social prescribing:** connecting individuals to community resources, information and social activities, statutory and non-statutory agencies.
- **Digital Creativity on Prescription aims to connect individuals to purposeful and rewarding activities via digital and interactive media in the context of BA.**
- It is not “digitally-enabled therapy” (e.g. CBT); the design and purpose of the digital activities are for recreation and culture.

Questions

1. Which creative digital activities, *and under what circumstances*, have the potential to improve depression in adolescents? **What are the underpinning therapeutic mechanisms?**
2. Which creative digital activities, *and under what circumstances*, have the potential to be harmful or counterproductive for depression in adolescents? **How can such risks be mitigated?**
3. How can we deliver “digital creativity on prescription” at scale and in different settings? **What are the barriers and facilitators?**

Digital Creativity on Prescription Work-Packages (WP)

WP1
Realist evidence synthesis

WP2
Curated bank of resources

C-M-O
"What works for whom under what circumstances?"

ComBAT

WP3
Nested case studies

analogous to:
- NHS Apps Library
<https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/>
- "Books on Prescription" website
<https://reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription>

Electronic or routinely collected information

WP4
Big data

Thank you!

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