

EVALUATING THE HEADUCATE EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION TO RAISE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN IN THE UK

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Introduction: The symptoms of many mental illnesses often begin during high school. Interventions to improve mental health awareness amongst adolescents may lead to improved outcomes. In the UK unfortunately many schools do not fulfil this need and mental health education is not a compulsory part of the curriculum.

Aim: To develop and measure the effectiveness of an educational intervention designed to raise awareness and empower adolescents to recognise signs of poor mental health and access services appropriately.

Objectives: Evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention through baseline and follow up surveys.

Methods: Students at Norwich Medical School collaborated with teachers, psychiatrists and general practitioners to design an educational intervention that aims to tackle stigma and raise awareness of mental health conditions among 13-14 year olds in the hope that they can access services when needed, support those around them and look after their mental health. To evaluate effectiveness of the intervention, a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey that utilises a social distance scale that has been adapted for this age group and will be used to gather baseline and follow up data after six months.

Results: We have developed a one-hour educational intervention delivered by medical students, that uses a variety of teaching techniques to raise awareness of mental health issues. We will start implementation in January 2013 so will have baseline effectiveness results shortly after.

Conclusions: Headucate has the potential to fill an important gap in effectively raising awareness of mental health issues in schools.