Pilot study of a randomised trial of a guided e-learning health promotion intervention for managers based on management standards for the improvement of employee well-being and reduction of sickness absence: the GEM (Guided E-learning for Managers) study

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Plain English summary

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Plain English summary

G
ood work is good for health and well-being. Key to maintaining and improving employee well-being is the knowledge and practice of their managers. There have been very few systematic studies of manager training in relation to employee well-being and sickness absence. This pilot study tested the acceptability and feasibility of using an already developed e-learning program for managers to help managers understand and learn how to support and value their employees. This program was completed online by managers in separate modules over 10 weeks. We recruited 424 employees and 41 managers from a mental health trust. Three groups of employees and their managers were randomised to receive the intervention and one group was the control group in which managers did not receive the intervention. Employees completed work and health questionnaires before and after the intervention. There was only a very small effect of the intervention on employees’ well-being and levels of psychological distress. Accompanying qualitative research demonstrated that the intervention was acceptable and interesting to managers who took part. Some managers said that they had too little time to complete the intervention and fewer managers completed the intervention than we hoped. The trial and the intervention were feasible to those who took part. The economic assessment of the trial was also feasible. A future trial may need to gain more buy-in from senior managers for the trial, encourage managers to complete the intervention, leave a longer time for the intervention to work and strengthen the intervention to encourage behaviour change in managers.
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