

A web-based, peer-supported self-management intervention to reduce distress in relatives of people with psychosis or bipolar disorder: the REACT RCT

Fiona Lobban,^{1*} Nadia Akers,¹ Duncan Appelbe,²
Rossella Iraci Capuccinello,³ Lesley Chapman,¹
Lizzi Collinge,¹ Susanna Dodd,² Sue Flowers,¹
Bruce Hollingsworth,³ Mahsa Honary,¹
Sonia Johnson,⁴ Steven H Jones,¹ Ceu Mateus,³
Barbara Mezes,¹ Elizabeth Murray,⁵
Katerina Panagaki,¹ Naomi Rainford,²
Heather Robinson,¹ Anna Rosala-Hallas,²
William Sellwood,³ Andrew Walker¹
and Paula R Williamson²

¹Spectrum Centre for Mental Health Research, Division of Health Research, Faculty of Health and Medicine, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

²Clinical Trials Research Centre, Department of Biostatistics, University of Liverpool (a member of Liverpool Health Partners), Liverpool, UK

³Division of Health Research, Faculty of Health and Medicine, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK

⁴Division of Psychiatry, University College London, London, UK

⁵Research Department of Primary Care and Population Health, University College London, London, UK

*Corresponding author flobban@lancaster.ac.uk

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Disclaimer: This report contains transcripts of interviews conducted in the course of the research and contains language that may offend some readers.

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Plain English summary

The REACT RCT

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Plain English summary

Relatives of people with severe mental health problems need better access to information and emotional support. The Relatives' Education And Coping Toolkit (REACT) is a website designed to do this. It includes lots of information presented in text and video, an online forum for relatives to share knowledge and experience, a messaging system where they can ask questions in confidence and a comprehensive directory of contact details for national organisations offering relevant support. Trained relatives support the forum and messaging.

In the UK, we recruited 800 relatives of people with severe mental health problems: all were aged ≥ 16 years, had high levels of distress, had access to the internet and wanted help. We divided them into two equal groups: one group received REACT (including the resource directory), whereas the other group received the resource directory only. To ensure that there were no differences between groups at the start, relatives were allocated to the two groups randomly, so they had an equal chance of being in either group. We followed up with both groups at 12 and 24 weeks, and received data from approximately three-quarters of the participants.

This trial found that REACT was acceptable, safe and inexpensive to deliver (£62.27 per relative), compared with face-to-face interventions, and that relatives using it felt well supported.

However, once we accounted for missing data (relatives who dropped out of the trial or did not complete the follow-up questionnaires), there were no significant differences between the groups. There was no evidence that REACT increased relatives' quality of life or saved money for the NHS.

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This report

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