

# Digital interventions in mental health: evidence syntheses and economic modelling

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**Declared competing interests of authors:** Lina Gega report grants from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) during the conduct of the study (NIHR201174). Lina Gega also received personal fees from NIHR outside the submitted work. Pedro Saramago reports grants from NIHR during the conduct of the study. Rachel Churchill report grants from NIHR during the conduct of the study (NIHR127810, PB-PG-1217-20041 and NIHR 17/63/130). Laura Bojke report grants from NIHR during the conduct of the study (NIHR128833). Laura Bojke is also a member of the NIHR Health and Social Care Delivery Research Researcher-led Panel.

Published January 2022

DOI: 10.3310/RCTI6942

## Plain English summary

Digital interventions in mental health

Health Technology Assessment 2022; Vol. 26: No. 1

DOI: 10.3310/RCTI6942

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## Plain English summary

**D**igital interventions are activities accessed via technology platforms (e.g. computers, smartphones and virtual reality) that can improve users' mental health and reduce addiction problems. To assess whether or not digital interventions offer 'value for money', we needed to compare their costs and outcomes with the costs and outcomes of alternatives, such as face-to-face therapy and medication. This was done through economic evaluations.

This project consisted of four work packages. In work package 1, we reviewed 76 published economic evaluations of digital interventions for different mental health and addiction problems. We could not directly compare their results because of differences in the methods that were used, but the overall picture suggested that digital interventions could offer good value for money as an alternative to 'doing nothing' or simply monitoring someone or giving them general information.

The picture was unclear when digital interventions were compared with face-to-face therapy. In work package 2, we pooled research studies that evaluated the outcomes of digital interventions in reducing anxiety and worry; the results were inconclusive because we were uncertain about the differences in outcomes between digital interventions and alternatives. In work package 3, an economic model suggested that value for money in digital interventions is driven by how good they are and not by how much they cost. In work package 4, we presented our methods and results to service users, mental health professionals and researchers who wanted to know more about the value of digital interventions for specific groups (e.g. children and older adults) and for outcomes other than reducing symptoms (e.g. reducing waiting times for treatment and improving attendance for therapy). Finally, the stakeholders highlighted four factors that may influence their decisions to use digital interventions, other than costs and outcomes: increasing choice, reaching underserved populations, enabling continuous care and accepting the 'inevitability of going digital'.

# Health Technology Assessment

ISSN 1366-5278 (Print)

ISSN 2046-4924 (Online)

Impact factor: 4.014

*Health Technology Assessment* is indexed in MEDLINE, CINAHL, EMBASE, the Cochrane Library and Clarivate Analytics Science Citation Index.

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## This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HTA programme as project number 17/93/06. The contractual start date was in September 2018. The draft report began editorial review in June 2020 and was accepted for publication in January 2021. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HTA editors and publisher have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

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