

Online treatment for OCD sufferers

December 2 2013, by Denise Cahill

Western Australian researchers have developed the first online treatment program for young people with obsessive compulsive disorder.

Curtin University researchers Associate Professor Clare Rees and Dr Rebecca Anderson designed the program for those aged between 12 and 18 to help them overcome the anxiety disorder.

The 'OCD? Not Me!' program has received more than \$450,000 in funding from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing and will run for the next two-and-a-half years.

Dr Anderson says there is around half a million young Australians diagnosed with OCD.

People with OCD may have rituals or strong compulsions to do certain things repeatedly in order to banish daunting or negative thoughts.

This can include repeated hand washing, checking of doors, switches and appliances, to having to complete mental check-lists or keeping objects in straight lines.

The program targets [young people](#) about to or who are going through adolescence and the teenage years—a period of big change.

"One thing that we know is that stress really impacts on OCD and ... obviously adolescence is very stressful so it is not surprising that we see a lot of onset at that age," she says.

The online program is eight modules in length (participants do a module a week) and is designed to take them through the steps of overcoming their OCD.

"It is set up with what we call the mountain metaphor, so this idea that you need to work through stages," she says.

"You can't overcome OCD in one go just like you can't climb Mt Everest. You have got to work your way through it gradually."

The program involves the entire family—something Dr Anderson says had possibly not been a component in other programs.

"There has been quite a bit of research on the impact having someone with OCD can have in a family and those impacts are quite significant," she says.

Family members can also inadvertently help keep the OCD going in the child by, for example buying them hand sanitiser so the program also gives them advice to help reduce that accommodation.

Dr Anderson says the online component will allow people all over Australia to access the program whether they live in rural or regional areas or WA cities.

"This is the first OCD specific program for children and adolescents of its kind," she says.

"It is exciting for us to be involved at that level to roll it out at that level."

More information: For more information, see www.ocdnotme.com.au/

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