

Researchers call for public to help test new online depression therapy

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People feeling depressed are being offered the opportunity to take part in a study exploring the effectiveness of a simple new therapy online. Credit: University of Exeter

People who are feeling low or depressed are being offered the opportunity to take part in a study exploring the effectiveness of a simple new therapy online. Behavioural Activation (BA) was recently found to be as effective as the "gold standard" talking treatment of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

Now, researchers at the University of Exeter are seeking participants from across the South West to help them assess BA's effectiveness when accessed online. The programme consists of a series of eight weekly modules which aim to help [people](#) re-engage in positive. These activities can then lead to improved mood.

Participants in the study will be given a wrist monitor to assess [activity levels](#) at the beginning and end of the eight-week course. Behavioural Activation has been pioneered and extensively tested at the University of Exeter, where it was shown in a recent large-scale study to be as effective as other more expensive treatments.

Behavioural Activation is an 'outside in' treatment that focuses on helping people with depression to change the way they act, rather than by focusing on the way they think (as is the case with cognitive or 'talking' therapies). Over time, links are made between behaviour and mood and people learn to manage their mood by engaging in positive activities. Therapists help people to seek out and experience more positive situations in their lives. The treatment also helps people reduce the amount of times they avoid difficult situations and helps them find alternatives to habitual negative behaviours.

The study is being led by PhD student Jeff Lambert who is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

He said: "We are looking for people who are experiencing low mood or depression to help us find out whether this simple, low-cost therapy, which has been shown to work as well as a face-to-face treatment, will have benefits for online users. If we find that this simple therapy is effective online then the question will be, why aren't we using it?"

Participants in the study will not have to visit the University, or a doctor, and all of their information will be kept confidential.

Colin Greaves, Associate Professor in Psychology Applied to Health, and Mr Lambert's supervisor on the project, said: "We are exploring whether people suffering with depression in the community can engage with and benefit from an online [treatment](#) system. If so, this will remove the stigma of going to the GP, and will remove long waiting lists, and

could be used on a national or even global basis to tackle the huge burden of untreated depression in our communities. So, if you want to help change the world, please sign up for our study."

More information: If you are interested in finding out further information contact Jeff Lambert at the following email address: jdl212@exeter.ac.uk

Provided by University of Exeter

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