

MindStep program helps people with anxiety

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The MindStep telehealth service offers cognitive behavioural coaching to complement the care people receive from their GP, psychologist or psychiatrist. Delivered over the phone by trained mental health coaches, the confidential program uses evidence-based techniques that improve mental health and wellbeing.

Results show that about 75% of people who complete the program show a measurable improvement in their mental [health](#) or recover completely.

The MindStep program, modelled on Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) in the UK, has been supporting people across Australia for more than six years, with recovery rates above 60%.

Through the partnership with Remedy Healthcare—which has provided in-[home health care](#) and telehealth for almost 100,000 Australians—Flinders Behavioural Health experts have worked with researchers to develop and deploy a suite of guided self-help materials that support high quality care and outcomes.

Flinders University's Fiona Glover says "the implementation of Flinders' developed and evaluated materials, used in conjunction with the Flinders mental health coach development courses, and underpinned by a robust supervision framework, positions MindStep as a leader in evidence-driven [mental health care](#)".

The paper cataloguing the research—"It's what's under the hood that counts: comparing therapeutic outcomes when using Australian versus UK-produced clinical materials in an Australian mental health program," by Anthony Venning, Tassia Oswald, Mary Barnes, Fiona Glover, Sharon Lawn, Leva Azadi, Nicci Tepper and Paula Redpath—has been published by *Australian Health Review*.

"These findings are particularly pertinent with COVID-19 changing the landscape of mental health service delivery, requiring greater flexibility in the use of tele-services to ensure access to effective mental health care for populations that may already experience problems with isolation, access and service engagement," says Dr. Venning.

It found that Flinders-trained mental health coaches achieve client

recovery rates of up to 60%, and reliable improvement rates of 58% for people experiencing more moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression, with the probability of recovery increasing with client age.

This timely research comes as anxiety and depressive disorders are increasingly putting demands on Australia's hospitals and health care systems.

"People hospitalised for debilitating mental health issues often go home with little follow-up support, except for appointments with a psychologist or self-help, except for appointments with a psychologist, self-help or crisis services," says Discipline of Behavioural Health lead Paula Redpath.

"How Australians engage and partner with services and healthcare providers has changed and it is critical that a responsive, accessible and timely care model that is integrated and human-centred broaden the reach so more people who need it can access it."

The findings are supported by Ruby Wolinska, a former Flinders University student who now works as a mental health coach in MindStep for Remedy Healthcare.

"Clients benefit from learning practical ways of managing their own mental health and wellbeing, demonstrating increased confidence and self-efficacy within a brief intervention," says Ms Wolinska.

"A great advantage of the program lies in its flexibility, being able to attend appointments from home or whilst travelling. In addition to promoting new skills for managing [mental health](#) symptoms during MindStep, the materials also promote wellbeing beyond the program's conclusion."

More information: Anthony Venning et al, It, *Australian Health Review* (2021). [DOI: 10.1071/AH20307](https://doi.org/10.1071/AH20307)

Provided by Flinders University

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