

# New therapies offer online support for anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorders

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Four internet-based therapies developed by experts at the University of Oxford's Department of Experimental Psychology and Department of Psychiatry are proving helpful for patients with social anxiety disorder

and post-traumatic stress disorders and for children with anxiety disorders.

Urgent treatment solutions are needed for children, adolescents and adults with mental health conditions. Despite the government committing to spending 8.9% of all NHS funding on mental health treatment last year, the pipeline to build new facilities and train new staff will take years and, on their own, are insufficient to meet demand.

A suite of online therapies, developed and clinically validated by expert teams at the University of Oxford's Experimental Psychology and Psychiatry Departments, is now available to help close this gap in care, and tackle anxiety disorders and mental health conditions across all age groups from children through to adolescents and adults. Patients work through a series of online modules with the brief support of a therapist through short phone or video calls and messages.

Randomized [clinical trials](#) by the University of Oxford team have demonstrated the impact of all four of the [online platforms](#). Excellent results led to a new commercial license partnership negotiated between Oxford University Innovation and Koa Health, a company well placed to leverage this cutting-edge technology and research. Koa Health looks forward to making the programs available to patients across many NHS services, beginning in West Sussex, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Leicestershire, Bradford, North Tyneside, and London.

Dr. Simon Warner, Head of Licensing & Ventures, Oxford University Innovation, said, "These four mental health digital therapies are a fantastic example of the world class expertise within the University of Oxford which has enabled us to launch cutting edge therapies with our industry partner Koa Health. The therapies are tried and tested and now readily available to help change the lives of people suffering from mental health conditions."

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) early value assessment recommended nine online therapies for use across the NHS. The therapies developed by the University of Oxford team, with funding from Wellcome and the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR), represent four of the nine selected therapies and will now be made widely available across NHS Trusts, mental health facilities, schools and colleges

One in five children and young people in England aged eight to 25 have a probable mental disorder and one in four adults in England experiences at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any given year.

Professor Cathy Creswell, a psychologist at the University of Oxford, whose team developed the childhood anxiety program explains: "Recent surveys suggest ongoing increases in the number of children and young people that are experiencing anxiety problems. Our online platforms, which were developed with support from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre (OH BRC), provide practical tools with guidance and support to help tackle issues from home."

Professor David Clark, University of Oxford, whose team developed the [social anxiety disorder](#) program adds, "Social anxiety disorder starts in childhood and is remarkably persistent in the absence of treatment. Internet programs that deliver optimal treatment for both adolescents and adults have the potential to transform lives and enable people to realize their true potential at school, in the workplace and in society."

Professor Anke Ehlers, a psychologist at the University of Oxford, and OH BRC Co Theme Lead for Psychological Treatments who led the work on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) says, "We've tested the digital [therapy](#) with patients who have PTSD from a broad range of traumas. Recovery rates and improvements in quality of life are

excellent. Our clients value being able to work on the treatment from home at a time convenient to them."

The team at the University of Oxford, Koa Health and Oxford University Innovation will work together to maximize the adoption of all four therapies adopted across NHS Trusts and schools over the coming year.

Oliver Harrison, CEO at Koa Health said, "Koa Health is committed to delivering scalable, evidence-based interventions for mental health. The programs developed by the Oxford teams can lower the barriers to care, deliver excellent outcomes, and reduce the cost to health services. In short, this means that our NHS is able to treat more people and improve mental health across the population. With an impeccable evidence base and approval by NICE, we see great potential to expand these programs worldwide, helping children and adults."

Dr. John Pimm, clinical and professional lead for Buckinghamshire Talking Therapies, said, "People using our Talking Therapies services had been successfully using internet-based cognitive therapy for social [anxiety disorders](#) and post-traumatic stress disorder as part of the research trial and we are now pleased that our therapists will be able to offer this innovative treatment to more people using the Koa platform."

Dr. Jon Wheatley, clinical lead, City and Hackney, NHS North East London, said, "City and Hackney Talking Therapies are looking forward to embracing digital technology in response to increasing patient demand. We are proud to be working with Koa Health as an early adopter of these innovative solutions that enable therapists to deliver gold standard evidence-based treatments through internet programs that are engaging and empowering for patients."

Professor Miranda Wolpert, director of mental health at Wellcome, said,

"These important online therapies have arisen from more than three decades of thorough science. Digital therapies have the potential to transform millions of people's lives around the world. We look forward to supporting more digital innovation in the years to come."

Provided by University of Oxford

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