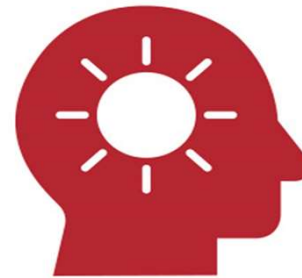




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*kite-tin*

Cross-border  
Healthcare Intervention Trials  
in Ireland Network

# Student Psychological Intervention Trial (SPIT)



Dr Elaine Murray

**Interreg**   
Northern Ireland - Ireland - Scotland  
European Regional Development Fund

**HSC** Public Health  
Agency  
Research and Development

**HRB** Health  
Research  
Board

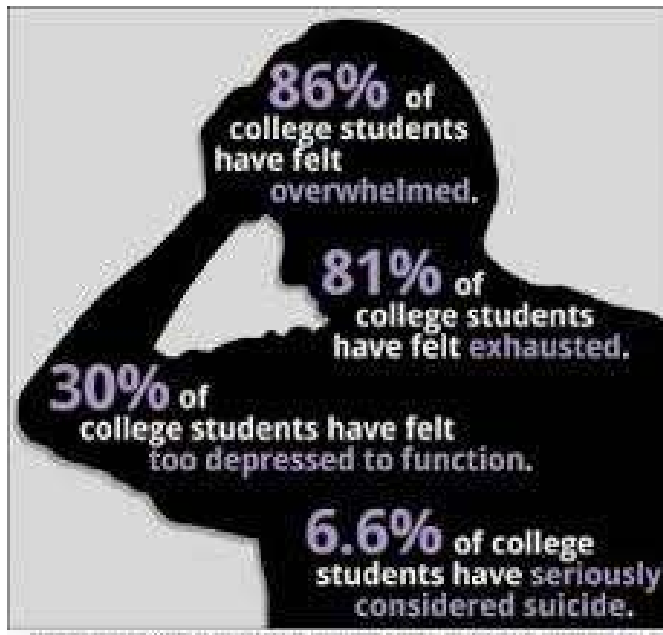
**Higher Education Network**

Mental health: a university crisis

It's time for universities to put student mental health first

**‘There is a tsunami of third-level students with mental health problems’**

Demand for counselling in colleges has jumped 40% in the past decade



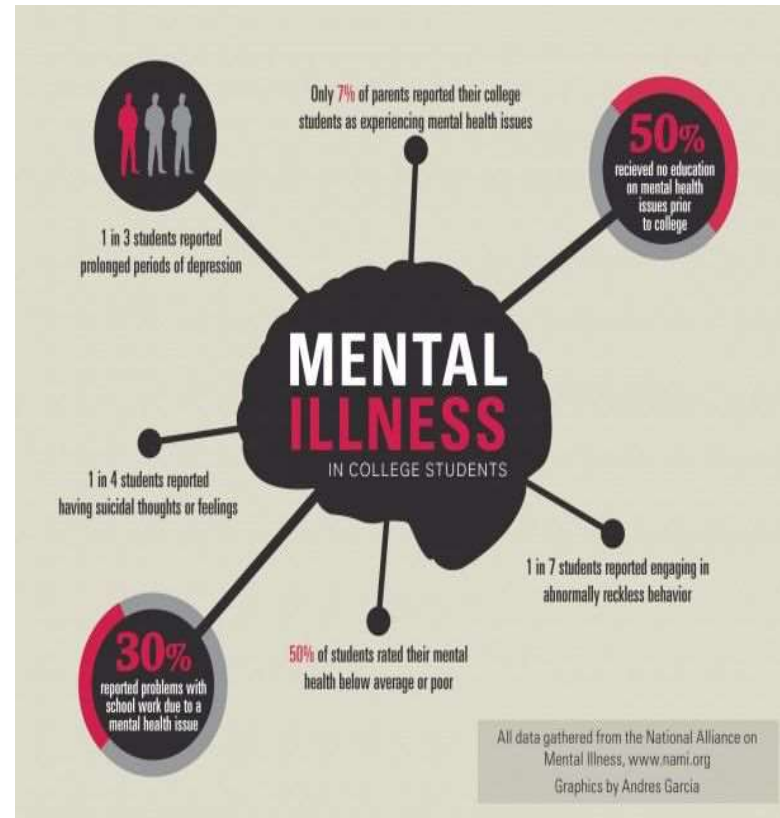
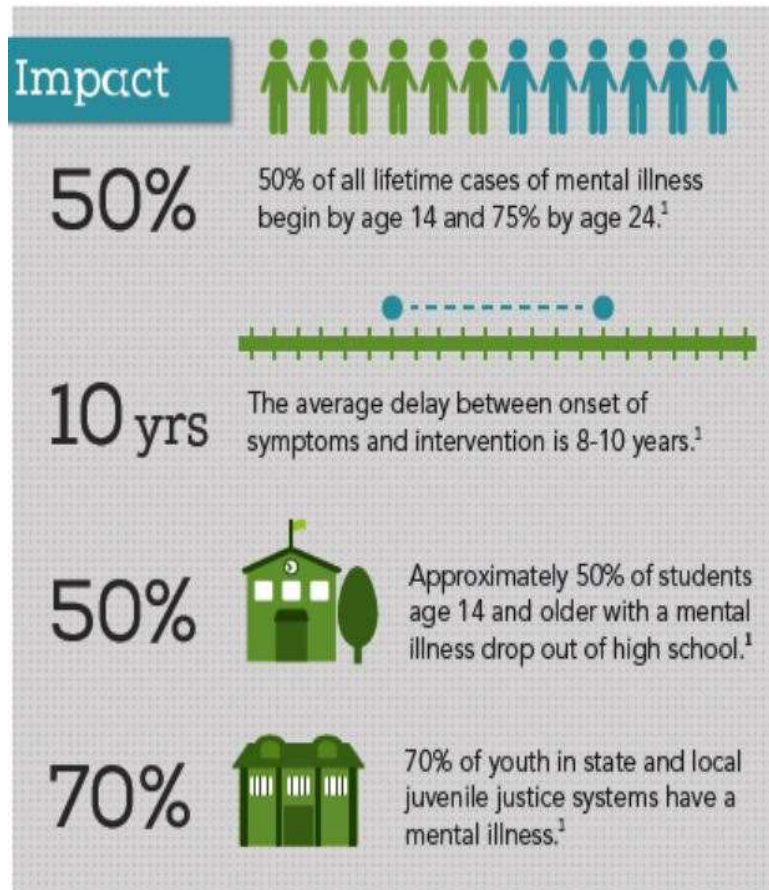
Supporting student mental health.

**student minds**

[www.studentminds.org.uk](http://www.studentminds.org.uk)

Talking changes lives.

# Impact of Poor Mental Health in Young Adults



# Ulster University Student Wellbeing Study

<b>Design</b>	<b>Longitudinal Study</b>
<b>Recruitment</b>	<b>Registration Week September 2015</b>
<b>Participants</b>	<b>1,646 UK &amp; Ireland first year students consented and provided a saliva sample. 739 fully completed survey</b>
<b>Survey Instrument</b>	<b>On-line survey developed by the WMH International College Survey consortium. Validated with DSM-IV criteria.</b>
<b>Saliva Collection</b>	<b>Saliva sample taken after consent. Oragene, DNA Genotek</b>

# Ulster University Student Wellbeing Study (2015)

## Lifetime prevalence rates

Disorders	Total (739)		Male (274)		Female (462)		Other (3)	$\chi^2$
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	
Mood - MDE	186	24.2	55	19.1	128	27.7	3	6.756**
Anxiety - GAD	173	22.6	49	17.8	121	26.0	3	6.312*
Panic Disorder	49	6.3	14	4.9	35	7.5	0	1.683
Broad Mania	27	3.5	7	2.5	19	4.1	1	1.567
Alcohol dep	75	10.2	31	11.1	44	9.5	0	.329
Drug abuse/dep	23	3.1	1.5	4.8	8	1.7	0	9.102**
Suicidality	237	31.0	68	24.3	166	35.9	3	10.329**
6-month ADHD	156	20.8	52	18.7	101	21.9	3	.339
Any disorder	400	53.2	135	48.5	262	56.6	3	4.215*
One disorder	172	23.2	63	23.0	109	23.5	0	
Two disorders	80	10.9	31	11.4	49	10.6	0	
Three or more	148	19.1	41	14.1	104	22.5	3	

# Help Seeking

## Help seeking for an emotional problem:

- 10% received help for an emotional problem in the previous year.
- Significantly more females (13.8%) than males (5.3%).
- Less than 20% of those who met the criteria for mental health problems received treatment.
- 22.3% of students said that they would probably not seek help for an emotional problem.

Ennis et al., (2019)



**What can we do to address this issue?**

# Student Psychological Intervention Trial (SPIT)

**Ulster University**

**Student Wellbeing, Students Union,  
Student Administration**

**Letterkenny Institute of Technology**

**VU Amsterdam**

**Western Health & Social Care Trust**



## Student Psychological Intervention Trial (SPIT)

The North West of Ireland has very high rates of mental health disorders and suicide. For many people, the symptoms related to these disorders start to develop during their late teens and early 20s. This study will investigate whether a recently developed web-based intervention is effective in alleviating the symptoms of anxiety and depression to determine whether the addition of an internet intervention to the current student mental health services would enhance support options and increase help-seeking among students with mental health problems.

The CHITIN project has received €8.84m from the EU'S INTERREG IIA Programme, which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).



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**[www.research.hscni.net/chitin](http://www.research.hscni.net/chitin)**

**[@CHITINProject](https://twitter.com/CHITINProject)**



# SPIT Project

## Overview



The Student Psychological Intervention Trial (SPIT) is:

- A two phase project being conducted at Ulster University (UU) and Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT)
- Part of the WHO World Mental Health International College Student Initiative
- Funded by Cross-border Healthcare Intervention Trials in Ireland Network (Chitin).
- The primary goal is to determine whether a recently developed web-based intervention is effective in alleviating the symptoms of mild to moderate levels of anxiety and/or depression among third level students.





# Phase 1: September 2019

## Recruitment

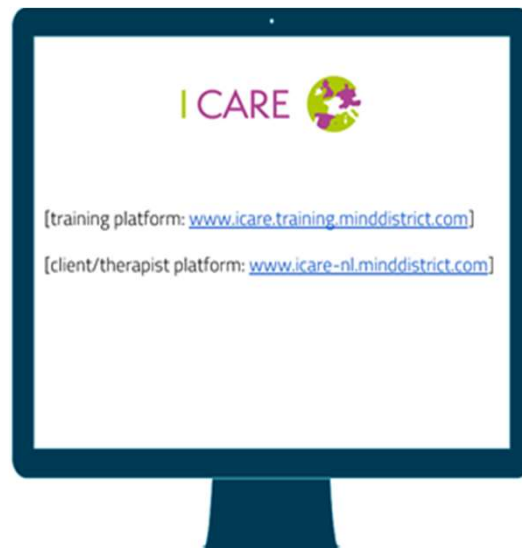
- All new registering first year undergraduate students were invited by email to take part in the study prior to registration.
- Students completed a consent form, provided a saliva sample, and completed the online survey

	UU	LYIT
Number of students recruited	1565	383
Number of fully completed surveys	1468	360
Number of partially completed surveys	32	3
Number who triggered the high risk alert	99	43



# Phase 2: Recruitment

- A randomized controlled trial (RCT) will be used to test the efficacy of iCARE to reduce symptoms of mild/moderate levels of anxiety and depression.
- Students will be randomized to EITHER **treatment as usual only (control group)** OR **treatment as usual plus the web-based intervention (intervention group)**.



## Phase 2: Intervention

- The intervention is a guided web-based trans-diagnostic intervention therapy targeting symptoms of depression and/or anxiety.
- The intervention consists of 7 online weekly sessions (45-60 minutes).



- The sessions consist of text, exercises and audio-visual components.
- Trained coaches will provide written support given via the messaging function of the intervention platform
- Participants will be allowed to access the intervention 24/7.

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# Phase 2: Main Endpoints

- Measured at baseline, following trial, 6 months and 12 months after completing trial

## – Primary Endpoints

- PHQ-9 (Depression)
- GAD-7 (Anxiety)
- MINI

## – Secondary Endpoints

- Treatment Satisfaction
- EuroQol 5D (health status)
- Educational Attainment/Drop out



- A qualitative study will be undertaken by Aware to gain insight into the unique factors associated with the delivery and success of the intervention.

# Phase 2: Progress to date

- **Ethical application for Phase 2 submitted and approved by filter committee, November 2019.**
- **UUREC meeting 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Pending results.**
- **Training of guides for intervention 10<sup>th</sup> February 2020.**
- **Planning underway for pilot study (12-15 students) to commence as soon as ethical approval is obtained.**

# Promoting the SPIT study

- 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Mental Health Conference, Derry, November 2019
- Student Wellbeing Conference, Coleraine, December 2019
- SMaRteN conference, Cambridge, December 2019
- Twitter and Facebook

## Upcoming events:

- NCUP conference, May 2020





# Links to Making Life Better Strategy

## Employment, Life-long Learning and Participation

6.10 *As well as physical health it is clear that mental health is a major public health concern in Northern Ireland, necessitating a strong strategic drive to prevent mental illness (where possible) and promote positive mental health and wellbeing in the general population.*

6.14 *Lifelong or adult learning has the potential to impact on health inequalities by providing skills and qualifications to enhance employment opportunities, and also by improving self esteem and confidence, which have been shown to be associated with healthier behaviours.*

- **Promoting positive mental health and awareness of mental health issues to the student population**
- **Supplying tools to manage stress**
- **Helping university students address issues which may impact on their academic achievement**

# Links to Making Life Better Strategy

## Improved Mental Health and Wellbeing

7.10 *New policy is under development to set the strategic direction to improve mental health and wellbeing and reduce self harm and suicide.*

7.15 *Improving health literacy aims to influence not only individual lifestyle decisions, and decisions about treatment and self care, but also raise awareness of the determinants of health, and encourage individual and collective actions.*

- **Testing the efficacy of an online CBT based intervention to address mental health problems, thereby improving psychological wellbeing and reducing the risk of self harm and suicidal behavior.**
- **As the intervention is self-help and CBT based, individuals are provided with the tools and psychoeducation to continue to understand and maintain their mental wellbeing.**



# Benefits to the Wellbeing and Health of People

- Creating awareness of mental health issues for students in regards to themselves and others, and promoting positive mental health
- Early identification and intervention
- Online CBT based intervention - provides the tools to manage and maintain positive mental health
- This intervention has been effective in other countries, but this is the first time to trial in an English speaking country
- Use of guides during the intervention to monitor and provide support
- Opportunity for intervention to be rolled out in universities and beyond



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Thank you

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