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The Springboard trial: Can web-based self-help improve functioning and reduce mood symptoms in people with type 2 diabetes?

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Statement of the Problem: Depressive symptoms are common in people with type 2 diabetes (T2D) with adverse consequences for social and vocational function. Despite the existence of effective depression treatments, the majority of people with T2D do not access these when needed. Web-based alternatives to more traditional psychotherapies offer a potential scalable solution to reducing the personal and economic burdens of T2D. This paper describes the protocol for a national randomised controlled trial (RCT) of myCompass, a web-based public health psychotherapy intervention, in people with T2D.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A two-arm RCT is being conducted entirely online. People with T2D and mild-to-moderate depressive symptoms are recruited via an open-access website and randomised to either myCompass or an active placebo program for eight weeks, followed by a 4-week tailing off period. Fully-automated, interactive and delivered via the Internet without clinician support, myCompass teaches CBT-based skills and supports symptom monitoring. The placebo program is matched to myCompass on mode of delivery, interactivity, and duration.

Findings: Outcomes will be assessed at baseline and 3-, 6-, and 12 months. The primary study outcome is work and social functioning. Secondary study outcomes include depressive and anxious symptoms, diabetes-related distress, self-care behaviours and glycemic control. This trial is funded by a project grant from Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council. Nationwide recruitment is currently underway with the aim of recruiting 600 participants.

Conclusion & Significance: This is the first known trial of a web-based psychotherapy program that is not diabetes-specific for improving social and vocational function in people with T2D and mild-to-moderate depressive symptoms. A potentially scalable public health intervention could play a very large role in reducing unmet mental health need in this group; ameliorating the personal and societal impact of illness co-morbidity.

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