Mental health research

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Mental health disorders represent a heavy burden on Europe, both at the individual and societal level. More than 1 in 3 Europeans experience mental health problems in any given year, and even more are affected indirectly. The costs in Europe have been estimated at 461 billion EUR per year (2010). Poor mental health is a common cause for absence from work and premature retirement, impacting the productivity and competitiveness of the European workforce. People with mental health problems do not have sufficient access to mental health services that can help meet their needs.

The importance of protecting the psychological health and wellbeing of European Union citizens has come to the fore[i] as well as that of caring for refugee and migrant populations during times of crises. There is a need to develop better mental illness prevention, and to find more effective therapies in mental health care. This is partly a matter of financial investment, but also of how to design and implement mental health services that people with mental health problems actually want to use, as well as on how to meet the challenge of developing services to help promote and protect mental wellbeing in the whole population. Innovative approaches, delivered within and beyond the health sector will be critical to meeting these challenges.

Mental health research

Many new models in preventing and treating mental illness of prevention are being evaluated and compared, including various e-tools and care models such as promotion of mental health in the young, applications for monitoring and patient self-management, prevention of eating disorders and web-based cognitive behavioural therapy CBT. The aim of research is to develop preventive actions that are effective and to study how new therapies and tools can be integrated into existing health and care systems. An important objective is to show how effectiveness and quality can be ensured in practice and to provide ideas for policy initiatives. The investments in telemedicine[ii] and related innovations could help meet the needs of service users and potentially avoid some costs to health and social welfare systems. Seeing that the majority of Europeans use the Internet, and most of them do so daily, these e-health and m–health[iii] applications could bring benefits for mental health, such as reaching individuals who may be unwilling to come into contact with face to face services, by offering anonymity and thus overcoming stigma and labelling.

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Project examples

E-COMPARED studied a new method of depression therapy – computer-based treatment blended with fewer personal visits – and compared its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness with the traditional method of personal visits only.

In-MINDD created an online profiler to assess a person's risk of dementia based on their lifestyle factors, and provides tips on how to improve this risk.

EMERALD has contributed to the strengthening of mental health systems in low and middle-income countries by developing useful tools and training health professionals, managers, service users and care givers.

ICare is establishing a comprehensive model of health promotion, risk detection, disease prevention and treatment facilitation based on online interventions for the most prevalent mental health disorders.

ImpleMentAll is developing a toolkit for tailoring the implementation strategies of an innovative psychotherapeutic intervention – Internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy.

BOOST aims to create an innovative approach to strengthen social and emotional skills among children and young people at school, so as to promote mental health and well-being.

ECoWeB aims to develop and disseminate a mobile application (App) to provide engaging and personalized tools and psychological skills to promote emotional wellbeing and prevent mental health problems in adolescents and young adults

ME-WE aims to strengthen the resilience of Adolescent Young Carers in transition to adulthood (15-17 years old) in order to impact positively on their mental health and well-being

MILESTONE conducted a longitudinal cohort study of children and adolescents' transition process, and developed an innovative transitional mental health care model, creating guidelines for improving care and outcomes.

UPRIGHT general aim is to promote mental wellbeing and prevent mental disorders by enhancing resilience capacities in youths, through a holistic approach addressing early adolescents, families and education professionals, creating a mental wellbeing culture in schools.

PECUNIA is developing tools and methods to evaluate social costs in health technology assessment (HTA). Case studies will be carried out in three areas of mental health: depression, schizophrenia and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD).

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[i] Joint Action for Mental Health and Wellbeing and the EU Compass for Mental health and Wellbeing
[ii] the use of telecommunication and information technologies in order to provide clinical health care at a distance, especially in rural communities, and in critical care and emergency situations
[iii] mobile smartphone applications in the area of health and wellbeing