

A peer-support mental health mobile application for adolescents: Development of the Mind your Mate program

AINSLEY FURNEAUX-BATE¹, LOUISE BIRRELL¹, SOPHIA SPALLEK¹, NICOLA NEWTON¹, CATH CHAPMAN¹

¹*The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia*

Presenter's email: ainsley.furneaux-bate@sydney.edu.au

Introduction: Digital technologies are a possible avenue for prevention initiatives to target the significant social and economic impacts that anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders have on young people. This presentation will describe the development of the Mind your Mate program, a brief classroom lesson and smartphone app for adolescents targeting peer support around anxiety, depression, and substance use.

Method: Development of the Mind your Mate program was an iterative process conducted in collaboration with adolescents and experts. Development consisted of three stages: 1) scoping the literature; 2) end-user consultations including adolescent focus groups (n = 23); 3) app development and beta-testing. Data collected during the focus groups were analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

Key Findings: The development process resulted in the Mind your Mate smartphone app, a self-guided program that provides adolescents with normative information about mental health and substance use and facilitates checking in with friends. Adolescent feedback demonstrated a clear need for a program around helping friends and almost all agreed that they would be likely to access this information through a mobile app. Content, visual aspects, functionality, and user experience emerged as key themes.

Discussions and Conclusions: Mind your Mate is a smartphone app collaboratively designed by young people that aims to upskill and empower adolescents to better support their peers around mental health, alcohol and other drug use. A randomised controlled trial testing the feasibility, acceptability, and efficacy of the Mind your Mate program is currently underway.

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