

TSA Member case study

A Digital Supplement for Eating Disorder Service

Overview

An estimated 89,600* people across Lancashire have an eating disorder and this figure is growing by 7% each year. With no single cause, these complex mental health conditions include bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder, and anorexia nervosa, and can affect men and women of all ages.

Eating disorders can severely affect the quality of life of the sufferer and those that care for them and can shorten a person's life. But with the right care, people can recover.

To provide the right support, Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust provides an eating disorder service, run from clinics across the region. The team includes specialist nurses, psychologists, dietitians, and therapists, offering a wide range of care.

Solution

The team hadn't consistently used digital solutions as part of therapy, but saw that patients were increasingly on digital media. When the Trust provided its staff with access to the [ORCHA](#) platform, the eating disorder team immediately saw the potential and now prescribes health apps to supplement and enhance its therapy.

Dr Hannah Wilson, Clinical Psychologist, explains: "The ORCHA platform includes in-depth evaluations of health apps, enabling the team to find safe and effective apps to help a patient, and the tools to prescribe them. Before ORCHA I would have to spend at least a week using an app myself, to be clear on what I am asking of a client, and whilst I still now take a look, I don't need to take as long and feel reassured it has been reviewed against the criteria that matter. I can't try out the thousands of apps out there and so it's good to know that work has been done for me.

"Also when a client shows me an app they have found, I check its ORCHA review and so can advise if they should continue to use it or if there is a more effective app for their need. "I have found apps especially helpful when a patient is waiting to start their treatment. As although the team always strives to offer treatment to someone within a short space of time, sadly there is often a wait between assessment and treatment. This way I can recommend apps that can start to help them in that time."

Outcome

One app the team have found particularly useful is Recovery Record. With meal logs, meal plans, coping skills, secure messages, data & charts, it provides valuable support to the patient, whilst building useful behaviour information to review during appointments.

The team also prescribe Mindfulness apps such as Happier. Although they are not specific to an eating disorder, the app can be used to lift a patient's mood, meditate, or capture happy moments; which can all help patients to stay positive.



Dr Hannah Wilson, Clinical Psychologist

On the contribution apps make to the practice, Dr Wilson explains: “For me, eating disorders are complex. An app by itself is unlikely to be enough to enable a patient to recover, but I have found that they support, supplement and back up sessions. The apps enable patients to receive some support between appointments.

“For example, they help people to more accurately monitor what we have asked them to, be it their mood or what they’ve eaten. People carry their phone everywhere and so are much more likely to simply and discretely make a note, rather than pull a piece of paper that could be spotted by others or lost. Apps can also provide a source of motivation to help patients keep to their treatment plans. Some also provide real practical assistance with meal planning.

“Our clients of all ages use apps every day. If we can become part of that world, we can become more effective and sustainable. Apps also provide a great tool for patients to use long after they have been discharged from our service, to help maintain their progress and stay well.”

*Source: <https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/media-centre/eating-disorder-statistics>

About TSA

TSA is the industry body for technology enabled care (TEC) services, representing organisations including telecare and telehealth service providers and suppliers, commissioners, digital health businesses, housing associations, emergency services, academics, charities and government bodies.

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