To develop a mental health and substance use app that addresses the needs of university students:

Methods

- Preliminary analysis was performed on an ongoing, cross-sectional student mental health and substance use survey administered weekly at the University of British Columbia under the WHO-World Mental Health College Student (WMH-ICS) Initiative to identify target areas for intervention.

- The Intervention is delivered in 2 ways:
  1. Chatbot - automated chatbot to deliver evidence-based interventions based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT), Metacognitive Training (MCT) and psychoeducation.
  2. Guide Videos - advice from professionals, peers, and other members of the UBC community.

Content is divided into 6 categories: each have their own interactive maps that outline the available content.

Ex: Thought challenging, behavioural activation, problem solving, sleep, stigma, motivational interviewing.

Discussion

- During the co-development process, student stakeholders identified that having the app connect to the real-world was important. The Services and Community components were developed to connect users to external support resources and peers through university groups.

- While many interventions include brief coaching for all users, stepped-support frameworks, such as ours, operate with the understanding that, for some users, minimal intervention is sufficient. By redistributing resources so that more resources are used on the individuals who demonstrate a need, we hope to better address the needs of this population.

- Although many individuals may experience both mental health and substance use issues in university, the majority of e-interventions focus solely on one of these aspects, and often in the case of substance use, only one substance. We anticipate that combining all these elements together will provide additional benefits, beyond if they were delivered separately.

Future Directions

- We will be doing multiple studies to test the app. This will include a Virtual Bootcamp to get additional user feedback, a Pilot feasibility study of the processes, and a full Randomized Control Trial to test the efficacy of the intervention.

- Future research is needed to identify the best ways to support e-interventions to improve adherence and engagement. While many studies either provide support for all users or for none, there are likely some people who will benefit more from these additional resources than others.

References


