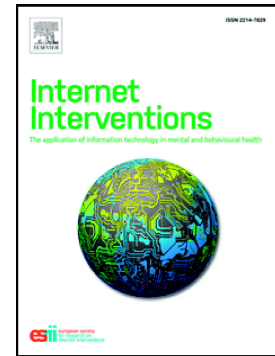


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Improving attitudes toward e-mental health services in the general population via psychoeducational information material: A randomized controlled trial

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Title

Improving attitudes toward e-mental health services in the general population via psychoeducational information material: A randomized controlled trial.

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Abstract

Introduction: In recent years, effective Internet-delivered electronic (e-) mental health services have been developed to overcome the limited resources in face-to-face health care. For the successful dissemination of e-mental health services, individual predictors for their uptake and utilization need to be explored. For instance, little is known about the role of different information sources in attitudes toward Internet therapies. On the basis of technology acceptance framework, this pilot study aimed to identify differences in both attitudes and intentions to use e-mental health treatment services after providing psychoeducational information.

Methods: 439 participants (mean age 33 years, $SD = 10.6$ years; 72% female) were randomly assigned to one of three text-based information groups (neutral text: $n = 111$; expert evaluation: $n = 108$; user evaluation: $n = 112$) or a control condition (no information: $n = 108$). We assessed attitudes towards e-mental health treatments using a 15-item German e-therapy attitudes measure.

Results: Descriptive analyses revealed overall neutral attitudes toward Internet therapies. Ambivalent perceptions were found in terms of Perceived Usefulness (positive attitude) and Relative Advantage (negative attitude). The awareness of Internet therapies was rather low. Most participants evaluated self-help books, health websites and face-to-face counseling as more useful than web-based counselling and therapies and reported higher intentions to use conventional services in case of emotional problems. As hypothesized, variance analyses demonstrated that text-based information, especially expert evaluations, were associated with significantly more positive attitudes toward e-mental health treatment services compared to the control condition.

Conclusions: Taken together, this pilot study suggested a positive connection between the provision of general facts about e-mental health treatment services and attitudes as well as behavioral intentions to future use such services. However, a limitation was the omission of baseline attitudes assessment. Thus, further research is needed to gain deeper insights into the impact of information on attitudes.

Keywords: e-mental health service; eHealth; mental health; attitude; psychoeducation

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