




BMJ Open Efficacy of a digital mental health intervention embedded in routine care compared with treatment as usual in adolescents and young adults with moderate depressive symptoms: protocol for randomised controlled trial

Eva Szigethy ¹, David Wolfson,² Keneisha Sinclair-McBride,³ Kelly Williams,⁴ Grace Jhe,³ Erica H Lee ³, Mario Bialostozky ⁵, Meredith Wallace,⁶ Sonika Bhatnagar,⁷ DR Demaso,⁸ Donald M Yealy,⁹ Kathryn Hollenbach⁵

To cite: Szigethy E, Wolfson D, Sinclair-McBride K, *et al.* Efficacy of a digital mental health intervention embedded in routine care compared with treatment as usual in adolescents and young adults with moderate depressive symptoms: protocol for randomised controlled trial. *BMJ Open* 2023;**13**:e067141. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2022-067141

► Prepublication history and additional supplemental material for this paper are available online. To view these files, please visit the journal online (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-067141>).

Received 08 September 2022
Accepted 16 March 2023



© Author(s) (or their employer(s)) 2023. Re-use permitted under CC BY-NC. No commercial re-use. See rights and permissions. Published by BMJ.

For numbered affiliations see end of article.

Correspondence to

Dr Eva Szigethy;
szigethye@upmc.edu

ABSTRACT

Introduction There are unmet mental health needs of depressed adolescents and young adults (AYAs) across the USA. Behavioural technology adequately integrated into clinical care delivery has potential to improve care access and efficiency. This multisite randomised controlled trial evaluates how a coach-enhanced digital cognitive behavioural intervention (dCBI) enhances usual care for depressed AYAs in paediatric practices with minority enriched samples.

Methods and analysis Participants (n=750) ages 16–22 who meet threshold criteria for depressive severity (Patient Health Questionnaire-9; PHQ-9 score 10–24) will be recruited through paediatric practices across three academic institutions (Boston, Pittsburgh and San Diego). Participants will be randomised to 12 weeks of dCBI+ treatment as usual (TAU) (n=450) or TAU alone (n=300) in outpatient paediatric practices. Assessments will be completed at baseline, 6 weeks and 12 weeks with the primary outcome being improvement in clinician-rated and self-reported depressive severity (Children's Depression Rating Scale—Revised and PHQ-9) and secondary outcomes being self-reported suicidal ideation (item 9 on PHQ-9), anxiety severity (Generalised Anxiety Disorder), general quality of life (Satisfaction with Life Scale) and general functioning (Children's Global Assessment Scale). The study design is an intent-to-treat mixed effects regression with group, and covariates nested within the sites.

Ethics and dissemination All participants or their parent/guardian (under 18 years or unemancipated) will give informed consent to a study team member. All data are expected to be collected over 18 months. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a board at each institution in the United States that reviews and monitors research involving human subjects. IRB approval from the University of Pittsburgh was obtained on 30 November 2021 (STUDY21080150), from the University of California San Diego's Human Research Protection Program IRB on 14 July 2022 (802047), and from the Boston Children's

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

- ⇒ The study design allows for the evaluation of the clinical value-add of a digital behavioural intervention for depression nested in outpatient paediatric care.
- ⇒ The primary outcome is a blinded clinician-rated change in depressive severity, reducing bias.
- ⇒ Participants include a racially diverse sample of adolescents and young adults.
- ⇒ Potential heterogeneity may occur in treatment as usual.
- ⇒ Participant attrition at follow-up is possible, which may contribute to selection bias associated with differences attributed to the two treatment arms.

Hospital IRB on 25 October 2022 (P00040987). Full study results are planned to be published within 2 years of initial study recruitment (October 2024). Dissemination of findings will occur in peer-reviewed journals, professional conferences and through reports to participating entities and stakeholders.

Trial registration number NCT05159713; ClinicalTrials.gov

INTRODUCTION

Mental health disorders are associated with increased morbidity, mortality and healthcare costs.^{1 2} Behavioural health issues in adolescents and young adults (AYAs) are common and have worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.³ The recent surge in morbidity has strained traditional resources leading to delayed access to care.⁴ Early intervention utilising tiered modalities to complement traditional treatment is crucial to improving the health and future of our youth.⁵

Many evidence-based behavioural health treatments exist, with cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) as one that is effective in treating anxiety and depression.⁶ When treating AYAs with mild to moderate anxiety and depression, foundational CBT skills, such as cognitive reframing, behavioural activation and problem-solving improve symptoms in this age group.⁶⁻⁹

Despite the evidence, there are often few CBT resources to help treat AYAs with anxiety or depression. Furthermore, many AYAs do not follow through with treatment referrals or adhere to behavioural recommendations.¹⁰⁻¹²

Given the challenges in access to empirically supported behavioural therapies, many AYAs seek new modalities, including digital cognitive behavioural interventions (dCBI) to address access and use barriers. Studies have shown that dCBIs are as effective as standard treatment in improving anxiety and depression; particularly when coach facilitated.^{13 14} However, many dCBIs are only available commercially and without medical oversight or in research settings.

Objectives

This study has been designed as a multisite randomised controlled trial (RCT) comparing digital CBT+treatment as usual (TAU) to TAU alone in outpatient paediatric practices. The study will target patients ages 16–22 who meet threshold criteria for depression by scoring 10–24 on the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9), a validated tool used to identify patients at risk for depression.¹⁵ The primary outcomes will be blinded clinician-rated Children's Depression Rating Scale—Revised (CDRS-R) and the self-report PHQ-9, and secondary outcomes will include self-reported suicidal ideation ((SI) item 9) on the self-reported Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7) and Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) at 12 weeks post-treatment among patients randomised to TAU compared to those randomised to TAU+dCBI. The study is specifically interested in changes in self-reported depressive severity, passive SI, anxiety and quality of life and functioning. Moderators of treatment response will be explored, such as adherence to treatment, severity of behavioural health symptoms, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic class and geographical location of the participant.

Aims

Aim 1 is to test the efficacy of digital CBT to reduce both self-report (PHQ-9) and clinical-rated (CDRS-R) symptoms of depression at 12 weeks (primary time point) (6 weeks assessment as secondary time point). An exploratory subaim will examine the correlations between the two measures (PHQ-9 and CDRS-R) at each time point and the extent to which changes in the PHQ-9 are associated with changes in the CDRS-R.

Aim 2 is to examine if there is a reduction in passive SI (PHQ-9 #9), anxiety symptoms (GAD-7) and improvement in quality of life and functioning (SWLS and Children's Global Assessment Scale (CGAS)).

Aim 3 is exploratory and is to identify baseline characteristics that moderate treatment response and/or predict treatment adherence. Key baseline characteristics include race, socioeconomic class, geography (site) and participant expectancy for improvement (Credibility and Expectancy Questionnaire). The baseline characteristics were selected due to the expected diverse population across the three sites.

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Scientific Advisory Board

Scientific Advisory Board committee members will include mental health providers, researchers, subject matter experts and paediatricians. The board will monitor study progress relative to the goals and milestones, review study deliverables and provide strategic guidance and direction of the research.

Setting

The investigation will occur in three geographically diverse paediatric primary care practices: Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, Boston Children's Hospital and Rady Children's Hospital of San Diego, with Pittsburgh serving as the coordinating centre (see [figure 1](#) for proposed study flow). The participating paediatric clinics are representative of the targeted patient population. Prior to selecting study sites, each institution completed a questionnaire with details about their patient populations, clinic structure, triage and therapy protocols and available resources. The participating sites were selected based on site characteristics and patient populations.

Study population

Eligible participants are AYAs (age 16–22 years) who have at least moderate depressive severity and are patients at one of the three participating sites. Using a permuted block randomisation scheme, the study plans to randomise 250 participants per site (150 randomised to dCBI with TAU and 100 to TAU alone) for a total of 750 participants.

Patient recruitment and eligibility criteria

Paediatric clinics at all three sites are the source for recruitment based on a previous convenience sample noting similar patient characteristics as targeted and previous research performance. Minority sample enrichment will occur.

Patients who score 10–24 on the PHQ-9 (which suggests at least moderate depression) will be introduced to the study by their paediatric clinician or integrated health therapist (IHT). If the patient is under 18, the clinician will introduce the study to both the patient and parent/guardian. If the patient and parent or guardian (if appropriate) is interested in the study, a member of the research team will contact the patient to explain the study in more detail and complete further screening measures after consent (see online supplemental file for informed

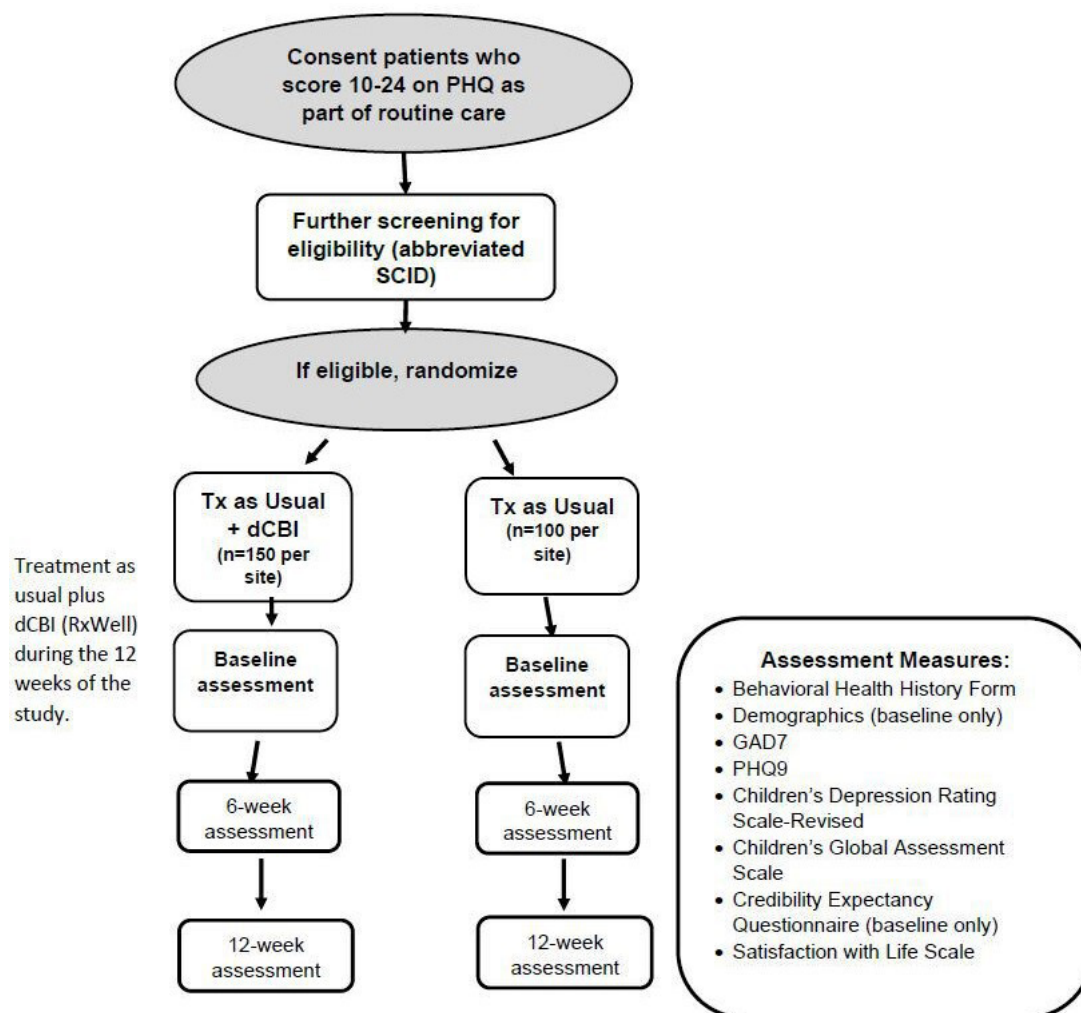


Figure 1 Study flowchart. dCBI, digital cognitive behavioural intervention; GAD7, Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7; PHQ9, Patient Health Questionnaire-9.

consent document). This study will only include English-speaking AYAs with access to a smartphone. Patients will be excluded from the study if they have had a current suicide attempt in the past 3 months or current severe psychiatric disorder of bipolar disorder, current substance misuse or dependence, thought disorder, or patients who score greater than 24 on the PHQ-9.

TAU control group

Participants randomly assigned to the TAU group will receive standard care, consisting of a tiered stepped care model of behavioural therapy if deemed necessary. This is by the IHT or clinical team at each practice, or referral to outside therapists as part of routine care, with the provision of augmentation of therapy (or addition of an antidepressant) at the discretion of the clinical team. Therapists at each site receive standardised education and supervision with quality assurance measures in place as part of routine clinical care. Psychotropic medications and previous behavioural treatment will be recorded at baseline. Number of therapy sessions, and addition of antidepressant or other psychotropic medication and/or dose changes over the study period will also be measured.

Intervention group

Participants randomly assigned to the intervention group (dCBI+TAU) will receive TAU and additionally will have access to the dCBI. The dCBI uses a platform called RxWell, a trans-CBT mobile app product addressing depression and anxiety that was developed based on standard CBT techniques. RxWell combines health coaching support with evidence-based techniques. RxWell provides users with brief (5–10 min) skill building techniques such as relaxation, behavioural activation and exposure, distress tolerance, cognitive reframing and mindfulness meditation, for anxiety and depression. Users have access to a goal-setting tab and 'in the moment relief' section, which contains over 17 techniques, 14 of which are brief audios to help users engage relaxation responses (see figure 2). The user will use the depression path, and if they express significant anxiety; the coach can personalise the programme by pulling in any of the 53 techniques from the anxiety path. Clinicians will participate in a training about how to introduce the dCBI and explain to participants that the dCBI is most helpful if used at a dose of completing at least three techniques

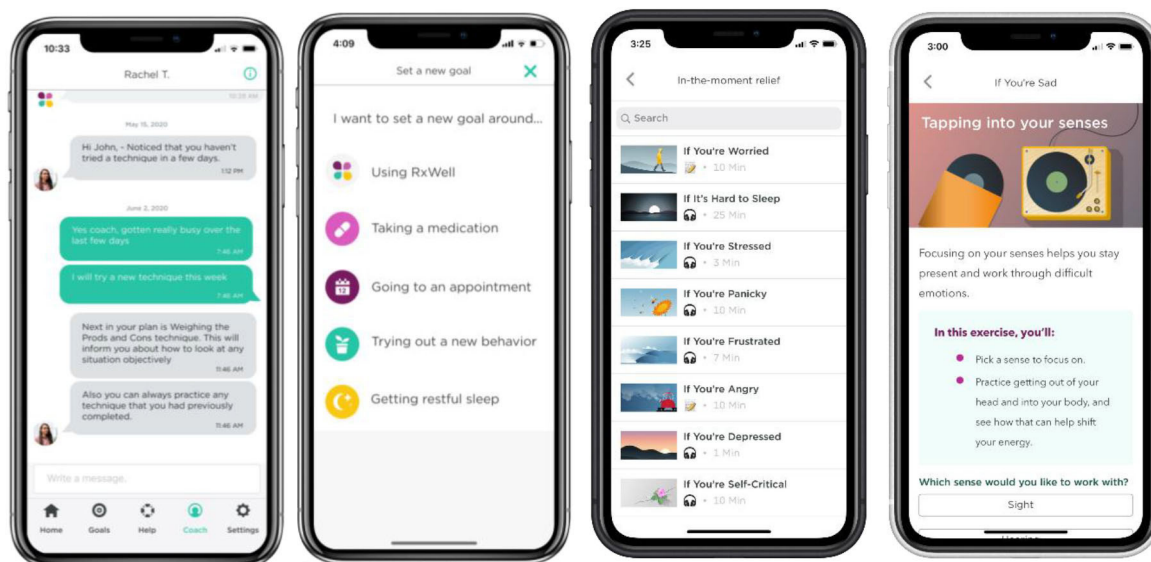


Figure 2 RxWell^a screenshots: digital coaching, goal setting, CBT technique library and practice again. ^aThe 'Depression Track' programs have a library of 40 techniques, respectively. Users have access to a goal-setting tab and an 'in the moment relief' section which contains 17 techniques, 14 of which have brief audios to help users engage relaxation responses. CBT, cognitive behavioural therapy.

per week. Engagement data will be captured using the RxWell PowerBI analytics dashboard. The number of completed techniques and number of messages sent to the coach will be analysed. Results of a quality improvement project using RxWell for AYAs at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center demonstrated that use of the dCBI was associated with a significant decrease in anxiety and depression scores between baseline and 1 month, and up to 3 months.¹⁶

Participants in both groups (intervention and control) will receive up to \$75 (USA) compensation for participation in the study.

Coaching model

RxWell includes an integrated digital health coach that is assigned to each user. Coaches are bachelor's-level graduates who complete additional training in motivational interviewing and CBT for treating anxiety and depression. Health coaches are supervised by a licensed mental health clinician. The health coach communicates with users via asynchronous, secure, within-app messaging. Their role is to reinforce CBT principles, guide users through goal setting, motivate and help users work through challenges, recognise successes and humanise the experience for the user.

The coaches interact with their users within the app through a coaching dashboard. These interactions are based on all information that a user inputs into the app, including the messages to their coach and the techniques completed. Decisions made by the coach to modify a user's path will be monitored during weekly coach supervisions and other quality assurance processes in place. Coaches message every 2 to 3 days to keep the user engaged or motivate them for initial engagement periods with less frequent engagement if users do not respond.

Study risk management protocol

Risk assessment for each user is completed daily, through review of all messages by the coach. Digital health coaches follow a risk escalation protocol, which includes recognising any signs of risk, from increased distress to suicidal or homicidal ideation, reaching out to the user appropriately based on the level of risk and contacting their supervisor. AYAs who appear to be at risk for harm or deterioration based on increased distress from their write-in responses in the techniques, significant increase in GAD-7 or PHQ-9 scores and/or messages to their coach receive specific action. The digital health coach will reach out to their licensed mental health supervisor about the observations. Concurrently, the coach will message the user and encourage them to reach out to their medical provider or 911, depending on the severity of escalation. Licensed supervisors determine the need for further outreach to AYAs, referring clinicians and/or pre-identified study site mental health providers.

Primary outcome measures

The primary outcome is depression severity at 12 weeks measured by the clinician-rated CDRS-R and the self-reported PHQ-9 measure. These measures will also be administered at baseline and 6 weeks after baseline. Our rationale for using both is that studies have shown that although self-rated and clinician-rated depression measures are moderately to strongly correlated at baseline, they probe different symptoms and are subjected to differences in report bias, depressive and personality subtypes and ethnic and socioeconomic factors that make the use of both valuable in measuring treatment effectiveness.^{17 18}

Clinician-rated CDRS-R

The CDRS-R is a rater administered 17-item interview completed by phone, with item ratings between 1 (=no difficulties) and 5 or 1 and 7 (=clinically significant difficulties) (adding up to a total score between 17 to 113). A score of ≥ 40 indicates depressive symptomatology and a score ≤ 28 often indicates remission within trials.¹⁹

Patient Health Questionnaire-9

The PHQ-9 has 9 items, each scored from 0 to 3 for 27 maximum total (24 maximum total at screening in this study due to exclusion criteria). Total scores indicate depression severity. A score of 0–4 indicates no depressive symptoms, 5–9 indicates mild depressive symptoms, 10–14 indicates moderate depressive symptoms, 15–19 indicates moderate severe depressive symptoms and 20–27 indicates severe depressive symptoms.¹⁵

Secondary outcomes measures

The secondary outcomes include anxiety severity (GAD-7), evidence of passive SI (item 9, PHQ-9), general quality of life (SWLS) and CGAS score (completed by a blinded rater). All measures are completed at baseline, 6 weeks and 12 weeks. All self-reported measures will be completed online through the secure data collection platform, REDCap Cloud and the clinician-rated CGAS will be completed by phone.

Suicidal ideation

The question about suicidality is item #9 in the PHQ-9, and the score is a 0–3 range. This is a sensitive indicator of SI.^{20 21}

Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)

The GAD-7 has 7 items and a total score that can range from 0 to 21. Total scores of 0–4 indicate no anxiety symptoms, 5–9 indicate mild GAD symptoms, 10–14 indicate moderate GAD symptoms and a score ≥ 15 indicates severe GAD symptoms.²²

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The SWLS is a self-rated 5 item measure that is scored from 1 to 7 with a maximum score of 35. Higher scores correlate with higher satisfaction, with a range from extremely satisfied (scores 31–35) to extremely dissatisfied (< 9).²³

Children's Global Assessment Scale (CGAS)

The CGAS is a rater-assessed measure that indicates the level of general functioning over the past month, focusing on the subject's most impaired level of functioning during that period on a hypothetical continuum of health-illness. Scores range from 1 to 100 with 100–91 corresponding to superior functioning and 31–40 with major impairment in functioning in several areas and unable to function in one of those areas.²⁴

Covariates

Covariates have been selected a priori based on clinical and scientific rationale: gender, race/ethnicity, parental

education and insurance (public vs private). Gender and race/ethnicity will be collected from a self-report measure.

Statistical methods

Sample size and sampling design

Sample size estimate: 450 (150 per site) participants will be randomised to dCBI+TAU. Assuming 70% enrolment in the app, it is expected that $n=315$ will initiate the intervention (105 per site). 300 (100 per site) participants will be randomised to TAU alone. With 30% anticipated attrition at 3 months in both treatment arms, it is predicted that $n=430$ (220 in dCBI+TAU, 210 in TAU alone) will have complete 3-month data. Any consented patients who are excluded from randomisation and who are lost to follow-up will be recorded.

Power analysis: $N=430$ patients ($n=220$ dCBI+TAU, $n=210$ TAU) are expected to have complete 3-month data. However, multiple imputation will be used for intent-to-treat (ITT) analyses to retain the full $n=615$ ($n=315$ dCBI+TAU, $n=300$ TAU). Power is provided for both the complete data sample and the ITT sample. Based on our phase 1 open trial of dCBI in 506 AYAs with anxiety/depression, a PHQ-9 between-group Cohen's d effect size of $d=0.40$ is expected for baseline-to-12-week change in depressive symptoms. With $\alpha=0.025$ (two primary outcomes), >0.97 power is expected to detect this difference using a two-sided two-sample t test for samples of $n=430$ – 615 .

Allocation of participants to study and control arms

Participants will be randomly assigned to one of the two treatment arms by block site randomisation with a 3:2 ratio using computer generated randomisation sequence for each site, with block size randomly selected to be 5 or 10. Randomisation does not include stratification. Approximately 33% of participants will come from each of the three sites. Research staff at each site will enrol participants.

Data collection, handling and analysis

Data will be entered into REDCap Cloud. The REDCap Cloud server offers robust security to ensure privacy and is accessible with restricted permission to study team members. A bimonthly check will occur for quality purposes. The coordinating centre will oversee the intra-study data sharing process.

Preliminary exploratory analyses will be conducted to examine missing data and reasons for why the data are missing, assess distributions and check for outliers. Exploratory analyses will be conducted to ascertain data characteristics and screen for outliers, investigate the internal consistency and reliability of the measurement scales using Cronbach's α and verify the statistical assumptions of the planned primary analyses. If assumptions are violated, alternative procedures such as data transformation or more robust statistical methods will be considered. Missing data will be examined using available

data on subject characteristics. Logistic regression models will be created to compare characteristics of subjects who remained in the study versus those who dropped out. If data are determined to be missing at random, multiple imputation and/or likelihood estimation procedures will be used to produce unbiased estimates and allow retention of participants with missing data. If data are determined not to be missing at random, pattern mixture or selection modelling will be used to investigate attrition. Finally, a summary will be completed of baseline demographic and clinical information on participants and intervention usage/fidelity for each arm.

Aims 1–2: the primary outcome assessment is an intent to treat (ITT) analysis.²⁵ Across all analyses, site effects will be examined by performing stratified analyses and examining interactions. For the primary 12-week outcomes, a linear mixed effects model will be used to regress the 12-week CDRS-R on group (dCBI+TAU vs TAU alone), baseline CDRS-R and covariates. A similar model will be fit using PHQ-9 instead of CDRS-R. Secondly, a linear mixed effects model will be used to regress each repeatedly measured depression outcome on categorical time (baseline, 6 weeks, 12 weeks), group (dCBI+TAU vs TAU) and the time by treatment interaction. A significant interaction will indicate that the groups differ in their time course. Mixed models will include a random site effect to account for nesting. The study will plan to use comparisons to test whether changes from baseline to 6 and 12 weeks differ between groups as well as to determine whether the improvement in each group is linear. The former test will indicate group differences in slope, while the latter test will indicate whether changes are linear or non-linear. Covariates will include gender, race and socioeconomic status. For continuous secondary outcomes (anxiety, QOL, functioning), a similar modelling strategy will be used as outlined for the primary outcome. For SI, a generalised linear mixed effects model with a logit link will be used. The 6-week time point will be used to explore the slope of change of depressive severity. Finally, as an exploratory subaim, we will quantify the strength of association among the PHQ-9 and CDRS-R. To accomplish this, we will examine correlations between scales at each visit as well as the correlations between changes in each scale (eg, from baseline to 6 weeks and 6 weeks to 12 weeks). We will also use the linear mixed effects modelling strategy defined above to regress the CDRS-R on the PHQ-9.

Aim 3: in the mixed effects models described above, the study will test potential moderators (race, socioeconomic status, geography and expectancy) of the treatment effect on the outcome with a three-way interaction of treatment, time and the moderator. If significant, contrasts and stratified analyses will be used to further interpret results. If the three-way interaction is non-significant, the main effects will also be tested to identify non-specific predictors. Predictors of treatment engagement will also be examined within the dCBI+dTAU group, defined as completing at least three techniques. Finally, per

protocol analyses will be explored, including only participants in the treatment arm who had sufficient engagement, defined as at least three techniques for descriptive purposes. Additional app-related variables (eg, time spent using app, number of techniques repeated) will be examined. Data will be analysed using R.

Safety

Breach in participant confidentiality will be minimised by assigning a unique study ID to each participant. All data will be secured in REDCap Cloud, which has multiple layers of security as a Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant research database platform. HIPAA is a US federal law that required a creation of national standards to protect sensitive health information from being disclosed without the patient's consent or knowledge.²⁶ The dCBI only collects a patient's email address to send a verification code to download the secure app. The email is housed in the dCBI HIPAA compliant administrative portal that is not accessible to the coaches or study team.

Patient and public involvement

None.

ETHICS AND DISSEMINATION

All participants or their parent/guardian (under 18 years or unemancipated) will give informed consent to a study team member. Each participant will receive a PDF file of the informed consent form. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is a board at each institution in the United States that reviews and monitors research involving human subjects. This study protocol was approved by the University of Pittsburgh IRB on 30 November 2021 (STUDY21080150). The study subsequently receive approval from University of California San Diego's Human Research Protection Program IRB on 14 July 2022 (802047) and Boston Children's Hospital IRB on 25 October 2022 (P00040987). Study results will be shared through peer review publication and presentation at national meetings plus dissemination of the findings back to providers and stakeholders.

Author affiliations

¹Department of Psychiatry and Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

²Department of Pediatrics, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Health System, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

³Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

⁴University of Pittsburgh Medical Center Health System, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

⁵Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego, San Diego, California, USA

⁶University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

⁷Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

⁸Department of Psychiatry, Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

⁹Department of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Twitter Kathryn Hollenbach @kathyhollenbach

Contributors The principal investigator ES who is the corresponding author of this manuscript is involved in preparation of protocol and revisions, organising scientific advisory board meetings, and publications of reports. DW and SB are involved in study oversight, and revision of the protocol and manuscript. KS-M, GJ, EHL, DRD and KH are also involved in the study oversight, and revision of the protocol and manuscript. KW, MB and DM are involved in the revision of the protocol and manuscript. MW is involved in the revision of the protocol and manuscript as well as the statistical analysis and data summaries of the study.

Funding This work was supported by a donation from YourMomCares (no award or grant number is associated with this donation).

Competing interests None declared.

Patient and public involvement Patients and/or the public were not involved in the design, or conduct, or reporting, or dissemination plans of this research.

Patient consent for publication Not applicable.

Provenance and peer review Not commissioned; externally peer reviewed.

Supplemental material This content has been supplied by the author(s). It has not been vetted by BMJ Publishing Group Limited (BMJ) and may not have been peer-reviewed. Any opinions or recommendations discussed are solely those of the author(s) and are not endorsed by BMJ. BMJ disclaims all liability and responsibility arising from any reliance placed on the content. Where the content includes any translated material, BMJ does not warrant the accuracy and reliability of the translations (including but not limited to local regulations, clinical guidelines, terminology, drug names and drug dosages), and is not responsible for any error and/or omissions arising from translation and adaptation or otherwise.

Open access This is an open access article distributed in accordance with the Creative Commons Attribution Non Commercial (CC BY-NC 4.0) license, which permits others to distribute, remix, adapt, build upon this work non-commercially, and license their derivative works on different terms, provided the original work is properly cited, appropriate credit is given, any changes made indicated, and the use is non-commercial. See: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>.

ORCID iDs

Eva Szigethy <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6783-581X>

Erica H Lee <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2370-9288>

Mario Bialostozky <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6315-5849>

REFERENCES

- Merikangas KR, He J-P, Burstein M, *et al*. Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: results from the National comorbidity survey replication - adolescent supplement (NCS-A). *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2010;49:980-9.
- Lynch FL, Dickerson JF, Rozenman MS, *et al*. Cost-effectiveness of brief behavioral therapy for pediatric anxiety and depression in primary care. *JAMA Netw Open* 2021;4:e211778.
- Jones EAK, Mitra AK, Bhuiyan AR. Impact of COVID-19 on mental health in adolescents: a systematic review. *Int J Environ Res Public Health* 2021;18:2470.
- Ridout KK, Alavi M, Ridout SJ, *et al*. Emergency department encounters among youth with suicidal thoughts or behaviors during the COVID-19 pandemic. *JAMA Psychiatry* 2021;78:1319-28.
- Colton CW, Manderscheid RW. Congruencies in increased mortality rates, years of potential life lost, and causes of death among public mental health clients in eight states. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2006;3:1-14.
- Shafraan R, Clark DM, Fairburn CG, *et al*. Mind the gap: improving the dissemination of CBT. *Behav Res Ther* 2009;47:902-9.
- Andrews G, Newby JM, Williams AD. Internet-delivered cognitive behavior therapy for anxiety disorders is here to stay. *Curr Psychiatry Rep* 2015;17:533.
- Butler AC, Chapman JE, Forman EM, *et al*. The empirical status of cognitive-behavioral therapy: a review of meta-analyses. *Clin Psychol Rev* 2006;26:17-31.
- Hofmann SG, Asnaani A, Vonk IJJ, *et al*. The efficacy of cognitive behavioral therapy: a review of meta-analyses. *Cognit Ther Res* 2012;36:427-40.
- Wierzbicki M, Pekarik G. A meta-analysis of psychotherapy dropout. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 1993;24:190-5.
- Miller LM, Southam-Gerow MA, Allin RB. Who stays in treatment? child and family predictors of youth client retention in a public mental health agency. *Child Youth Care Forum* 2008;37:153-70.
- Merikangas KR, He J, Burstein M, *et al*. Service utilization for lifetime mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: results of the National comorbidity survey-adolescent supplement (NCS-A). *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2011;50:32-45.
- Dallery J, Kurti A, Erb P. A new frontier: integrating behavioral and digital technology to promote health behavior. *Behav Anal* 2015;38:19-49.
- Stasiak K, Fleming T, Lucassen MFG, *et al*. Computer-based and online therapy for depression and anxiety in children and adolescents. *J Child Adolesc Psychopharmacol* 2016;26:235-45.
- Kroenke K, Spitzer RL, Williams JB. The PHQ-9: validity of a brief depression severity measure. *J Gen Intern Med* 2001;16:606-13.
- Szigethy EM, Silfee V, Marroquin MA, *et al*. A digital cognitive-behavioral intervention for depression and anxiety among adolescents and young adults. *Psychiatr Serv* 2022;appips202200045.
- Uher R, Perlis RH, Placentino A, *et al*. Self-Report and clinician-rated measures of depression severity: can one replace the other? *Depress Anxiety* 2012;29:1043-9.
- Plener PL, Grieb J, Spröber N, *et al*. Convergence of children's depression rating scale-revised scores and clinical diagnosis in rating adolescent depressive symptomatology. *Ment Illn* 2012;4:e7.
- Cuijpers P, Li J, Hofmann SG, *et al*. Self-Reported versus clinician-rated symptoms of depression as outcome measures in psychotherapy research on depression: a meta-analysis. *Clin Psychol Rev* 2010;30:768-78.
- Rosson RC, Coleman KJ, Ahmedani BK, *et al*. Suicidal ideation reported on the PHQ9 and risk of suicidal behavior across age groups. *J Affect Disord* 2017;215:77-84.
- Penfold RB, Whiteside U, Johnson EE, *et al*. Utility of item 9 of the patient health questionnaire in the prospective identification of adolescents at risk of suicide attempt. *Suicide Life Threat Behav* 2021;51:854-63.
- Spitzer RL, Kroenke K, Williams JBW, *et al*. A brief measure for assessing generalized anxiety disorder: the GAD-7. *Arch Intern Med* 2006;166:1092-7.
- Pavot W, Diener E. The satisfaction with life scale and the emerging construct of life satisfaction. *J Positive Psychol* 2008;3:137-52.
- Shaffer D, Gould MS, Brasic J, *et al*. A children's global assessment scale (CGAS). *Arch Gen Psychiatry* 1983;40:1228-31.
- Gupta SK. Intention-To-Treat concept: a review. *Perspect Clin Res* 2011;2:109-12.
- Centers for disease control and prevention. Health insurance portability and accountability act of 1996 (HIPAA). Available: <https://www.cdc.gov/php/publications/topic/hipaa.html>

Consent to Act as a Participant in a Research Study

STUDY TITLE: *Randomized Control Trial to Evaluate the Efficacy of a Digital Mental Health Intervention Embedded in Routine Care Compared to Treatment as Usual in Adolescents and Young Adults with Moderate Depressive Symptoms*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Eva Szigethy, MD, PhD
Professor of Psychiatry, Pediatrics, and Medicine University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine
Director of Behavioral Health, Chief Medical Office
Co-Director, UPMC Inflammatory Bowel Disease Specialty Medical Home
(412) 802-6696

CO-INVESTIGATORS: Sonika Bhatnagar, MD
David Wolfson, MD

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation

Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

We are conducting research to determine whether a mobile-based self-management program is effective in improving behavioral health outcomes in patients seen at pediatric practices. This program, called RxWell, can fill a resource gap by providing preventive management services to promote wellness and enhance usual care.

We are asking you to participate in this research because you are between the ages of 16 and 22 and meet criteria based on the questionnaire you completed at your routine clinic visit. We will ask a total of 750 individuals who also have smartphone access to enroll in a study in which we examine a mobile app-based self-management program (RxWell).

We will first ask you a series of questions regarding your behavioral health to further screen for eligibility. If eligible, you will be asked to complete several brief questionnaires now, 6 weeks, and 12 weeks after today. These are questionnaires that will ask about your satisfaction with life and your behavioral health, including mental health symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment history. You will also be asked to complete a demographics form as part of the initial set of questionnaires. You may be contacted by a study research team member to complete these questionnaires over the phone if you are unable to complete them online. If you consent to participate, you will have a completely random chance at being assigned to either 1) receive RxWell in addition to medical care within your pediatric practice or 2) only the medical care within your pediatric practice, which includes routine monitoring of your behavioral health.

Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This form provides information to help you decide if you would like to participate in this research study. You should take your time to make your decision. Members of the research study team can answer any questions that you have about the

study.

Who is conducting this research study?

This research study is being led by Dr. Eva Szigethy and other researchers at UPMC, Boston Children's Hospital (Boston, Massachusetts), and Rady Children's Hospital and Health Center (San Diego, California).

What is the purpose of this research study?

We are conducting research to determine the effectiveness of a digital behavioral intervention in improving behavioral health outcomes for patients ages 16-22 seen in pediatric practices. We are interested in studying how utilization of a coach-enhanced digital behavioral app compares to care as usual.

How many people will participate in this research study?

We hope to enroll 750 individuals in total from UPMC, Boston Children's Hospital, and Rady Children's Hospital and Health Center. This site, UPMC, will enroll up to 250 participants over the duration of the study.

How long will my participation in this study last?

Your participation in this study will last for 12 weeks (3 months).

What will I be asked to do if I participate in this study?

- You will be asked to read, complete, and sign this consent form.
- By agreeing to participate in this research study you are giving the research team permission to access your medical records. We will have access to this information for the duration of the study.
- You will be randomly assigned to one of two different ways (approaches) behavioral health care can be provided to you. Being randomly assigned means that you will have the same chance of being assigned to each of the care approaches described below. It is important to know that neither you nor the study team can pick your care strategy.
- You will be asked to answer questions about your behavioral health and satisfaction with life at three time points during the study (after you sign this form, in 6 weeks, and then in 12 weeks). The questions will be related to your personal background (age, race/ethnicity, education), behavioral health symptoms and history, including treatment, and your quality of life. Your responses will be entered into a secure website, but the research team may ask you to complete the questionnaires over the phone with a member of the research study staff, or online.

- **If you are in Care Approach 1:** You will receive the RxWell app as well as continue to have access to your medical and behavioral health team at your pediatric practice as needed.

You will be asked to utilize a UPMC owned digital behavioral tool, which is a phone application that consists of brief, 5-15 minute, audio and visual techniques to help manage any level of symptoms of stress, anxiety and/or depression. Because the digital tool is an application on your phone, it can be used anytime and anywhere.

You will be matched with a coach who will provide guidance and support throughout the course of the program. Coaches are not therapists, and they do not provide psychotherapy. Instead, they provide

motivational interviewing, guidance through the program, and encouragement in setting and working towards your goals. The coach will communicate with you through secure asynchronous text messaging in the program, in which the coach provides feedback and responds to your questions. The coaches exchange short written messages with users through the app, starting with a welcome message after initial sign-up. You can also communicate with your coach.

- **If you are in Care Approach 2:** You will continue to receive care from your medical and behavioral health team at your pediatric practice as necessary.

Will I be compensated (receive a payment) for participating in this research study?

- You will be compensated up to \$75 for completing study questionnaires. You will get \$20 for completing the first set of questionnaires, \$20 for the second set of questionnaires, and \$20 for the third (final) set of questionnaires. If you complete all 3 sets of questionnaires, you will be compensated an additional \$15.
- Your study questionnaire payments will be loaded onto a debit card that you will receive after completing your first set of questionnaires. Additional study questionnaire payments will be loaded onto the same debit card within 2 business days of completing your second and third (final) set of questionnaires.

What are the possible risks, side effects, and discomforts of this research study?

Infrequent (Rare) Risks:

- The risks associated with this study include the potential for a breach of confidentiality for both groups in the study. To reduce the risk of that happening, we will protect the confidentiality of this information by giving you a unique study ID that will be kept separate from any identifying information.
- You will be asked questions about private, personal matters and information related to your health. You may feel uncomfortable answering questionnaires/assessments or discussing your health with the research team. You may also feel tired from answering questionnaires or having discussions with the research team. There are no known psychological or physical risks associated with the questionnaires/assessments that will be used for this study.
- We would also like you to know that electronic or smartphone communications (e.g., text messages, emails) or internet communication that may happen as a result of contact with the research team cannot be guaranteed as confidential. It is possible that your confidential information may be collected and used by individuals who do not have permission to do so. UPMC takes precautions to prevent this from happening, but there is still a risk that your confidentiality may be breached.

Unknown Risks:

In addition to the risks listed above, there may be other risks to your health or well-being that are unknown at this time. We will monitor your safety during your participation in this research study.

What are the possible benefits from taking part in this study?

There is no guaranteed direct benefit to you from taking part in this research study. However, it is possible that you and other research study participants will benefit from the two care approaches that we are studying.

The potential benefits of using the digital app program include improvements in quality of life and behavioral health. This potential benefit is not guaranteed. In addition, the information we obtain from you and others may help us better understand how to implement a mobile-based program for adolescents and young adults

The results of this research study will be shared with other researchers and health care providers who may use this information to improve the way care is provided in other settings or health care facilities.

What treatments or procedures are available to me if I decide not to take part in this research study?

You can still receive care for your medical and behavioral health from this clinic or at other health care facilities where this care is provided. These treatments may or may not include similar types of treatment or technology that would be available to you if you choose to participate in this study. If you choose not to take part in or to stop participating in this study, you will still receive your regular care.

Your doctor may also be a member of the research study team. They are interested both in your medical care and in the conduct of this research. Before agreeing to participate in this research study or at any time during this research study, you may discuss your care with another doctor who is in no way associated with this research project. You are not obligated to participate in any research study offered by your doctor.

Will my insurance provider or I be charged for the costs of any procedures performed as part of this research study?

There is no cost to you for participating in this study. Neither you nor your insurance provider will be charged for the costs performed for this research study. You and your insurance company will continue to pay for your regular health care in the usual manner (care you would receive even if you were not participating in this research study).

CONFIDENTIALITY AND RELEASE OF YOUR PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION RECORDS

Who is requesting my personal health information and why is this information needed?

The research study team is requesting your authorization (permission) to access, review, and collect your medical records. We need this information to determine the impact, if any, of the care approaches being studied as part of this research study. We will access your medical records to collect demographic information; information related to your use of health care services (visits with your doctor and other health care professionals), the results of self-report assessments given to you as part of your normal care, and medications prescribed to you. This identifiable medical record information will be made available to members of the research team, and this authorization will be valid, for an indefinite period of time.

For how long will the investigators be permitted to use and disclose identifiable information related to my participation in this research study?

The investigators may continue to use and disclose, for the purposes described above, identifiable information (which may include your identifiable medical information) related to your participation in this research study for a minimum of 7 years after final publication and completion of this research study or for as long (indefinite) as it may take to complete this research study.

Who will have access to identifiable information related to my participation in this research study?

In addition to the individuals listed on the first page of this consent form and their research staff, the following individuals will or might have access to identifiable information (which may include your

identifiable medical record information) for the purposes of conducting and monitoring this research study:

- Authorized representatives, business associates, or affiliates of: the University of Pittsburgh Office of Research Protections; members of this research study's Data Safety and Monitoring Board, who will oversee and monitor some parts of this research study. Authorized representative of UPMC hospitals or other affiliated health care providers may have access to identifiable information (which may include your identifiable medical information) related to your participation in this research study for the purpose of (1) fulfilling orders, made by the investigators, for hospital and health care services (e.g., laboratory tests, diagnostic procedures) associated with research study participation; (2) addressing correct payment for tests and procedures ordered by the investigators; and/or (3) for internal hospital operations (i.e. quality assurance).
- We may share identifiable information with your health care team if there is an immediate risk to your health. Your health care team will use this information to make decisions about your treatment.
- Under certain circumstances we may be required to release your identifiable information in response to an order by a court of law.

PRIVACY

We will protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your records as much as possible, but cannot guarantee the confidentiality of your research records, including information obtained from your medical records, once your personal information is disclosed to others outside of the research study team.

A description of this clinical trial will be available on <https://www.clinicaltrials.gov/>, as required by United States law. This website will not include information that can identify you. At most, the website will include a summary of the results. You can search this website at any time.

What steps will be taken to protect my information provided for this research study?

Any information about yourself obtained from this research study will be kept confidential (private) to the greatest extent possible. Data collected during the study (e.g. medical records, other data forms and records) will be stored in a way that does not identify you by name. You will be identified by a unique Study ID and the information linking these subject codes with your identity will be kept separate from your research study records. Data stored on computers or web-based tools will be kept behind firewalls, encrypted, and password protected.

If your research data is shared with other researchers who are interested in this specific research study, your identity will not be revealed to those researchers. You will not be identified in any publication or presentation of the research results unless you sign a separate consent form giving your permission for us to do so.

Will the information I provide be used for anything other than the current study?

Our research study team may use information you provide for this research study, including your medical record information that we collect, to conduct research projects in the future that are different from what is described in this document. Your information will continue to be kept confidential.

We may also share information collected for this research study in the future with other researchers who are not involved with this research study. However, we will not share any information that

would directly identify you. All data provided to these individuals will be anonymous, and these researchers will be required to sign an agreement that states they will not attempt to determine your identity.

May I withdraw, at a future date, my consent for my participation in this research study?

- You have the right, at any time, to withdraw from participating in this study. You may also withdraw your permission to allow the research team to use and disclose health information from your medical records collected as part of this research study. If you withdraw authorization to collect medical record information, you will no longer be permitted to participate in this study. Any information obtained from you up to that point will continue to be used by the research team.
- You may withdraw your consent/authorization for your participation in this research study by providing a written and dated notice of this decision to the principal investigator of this research study at the address listed on page one of the consent form.
- The research team will continue to use any information already collected up to when you withdraw from the study.
- It is your decision to participate in this research study. If you chose not to participate in this research study or chose to withdraw at any point from this research study, your decision will not affect your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh, UPMC, or any other health care providers.

If I agree to take part in this research study, can I be removed from the study without my consent?

The researchers may withdraw you from participation if the sponsor withdraws the study, or if necessary for other reasons. For example, you may be withdrawn because of changes in your health.

If you are withdrawn from the research study, the research study team's decision will not affect your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh, UPMC, or any other health care providers.

Who else can answer my questions about my participation in this research study?

If you have any questions about your rights as a research study subject (participant) or wish to talk to someone other than the research team, you can call the University of Pittsburgh Human Subjects Protection Advocate toll free at 1-866-212-2668.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:

All of the above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. By providing my electronic signature below, I agree to participate in this research study and to allow the use and disclosure of my medical records and to collect data related to my care for the purposes described above, I consent to participate in the study and provide my authorization to share my medical records with the research team. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions, voice concerns or complaints about any aspect of this research study during this study, and that such future questions, concerns or complaints will be answered by a qualified individual of the research team or by calling the Principal Investigator of this study, Dr. Eva Szigethy (412-802-6696). I understand that I will be provided with a copy of my consent form for my records.

Participant's Full Name: _____
(first name, middle initial, last name)

Birthdate: ____ / ____ / ____ (mm/dd/year)

Answer **one** of the following three questions:

- What is your mother's maiden name? _____
- In what city were you born? _____
- What high school did you attend? _____