
THE TECH CONNECT PROGRAM: A PSYCHOSOCIAL TREATMENT ADHERENCE INTERVENTION FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH DEPRESSION

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Introduction: Despite annual investments of millions of dollars to develop and disseminate interventions for mood disorders in adolescence, approximately a third of youth dropout or terminate prematurely. Low adherence remains a fundamental impediment to treatment effectiveness and mental health outcomes.

Objectives: To address this issue, the Tech Connect Program was developed as a proactive and simple to implement package of manualized between-session contacts (e.g., texting, phone calls) and structural supports (e.g., transportation, childcare) that are individualized to increase adherence of adolescents with mood disorders who are at high risk of treatment dropout from community-based treatments.

Methods: A 2-arm randomized controlled trial (RCT) with depressed youths (age 13-17 years) and parents randomized to either standard community-based mental health care (control condition) or the Tech Connect Program plus standard clinical care (treatment condition) was implemented to examine the feasibility and acceptability of the Tech Connect Program protocols, to estimate intervention parameters including recruitment and attrition rates, and assess the preliminary impact of the intervention on treatment adherence and mental health outcomes.

Results: Findings show that Tech Connect Program is both feasible and acceptable to clinicians, youth and their families.

Conclusions: Although further research is needed to evaluate the Tech Connect Program, this feasibility pilot study has demonstrated an innovative, novel intervention to improve adolescent engagement and adherence to community-based mental health treatment.