

State of the Science: Digital Therapies in Pediatric Mental Health

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Abstract : Statement of the Problem: The burden of mental illness and problem behaviors in adolescence has risen worldwide. While less than 50% of teens have access to traditional mental health care, more than 73% have smartphones. Internet-based interventions offer advantages such as cost-effectiveness, availability, and flexibility. Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: A literature review was done using a PubMed search with the words mental health app yielding 2113 results. 103 articles that met inclusion criteria were reviewed, and findings were then described and synthesized. Findings: 1. Computer-based CBT was found to be effective for OCD, depression, social phobia, and panic disorder. 2. Web-based psychoeducation reduced problem behavior and improved parental well-being. 3. There is limited evidence for mobile-phone-based apps, but preliminary results suggest computer-based interventions are transferrable to mobile apps. 4. Adherence to app-based treatment was correlated with impressions about the user interface Conclusion & Significance: There is evidence for the effectiveness of computer-based programs in filling the significant gaps that currently exist in mental health delivery in the United States and internationally. There is also potential and theoretical validity for mobile-based apps to do the same, though more data is needed.

Keywords : children's mental health, mental health app, child and adolescent psychiatry, digital therapy

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