ibobbly: Preliminary findings from a pilot of an app for reducing suicidal thinking
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Background and Aims

Background

- High suicide rates in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Low levels of help seeking esp disengaged youth
- App, smart phone and tablet use increasing rapidly
- Few quantitative outcome evaluations of suicide prevention projects

Aims

- To reduce suicidal ideation
- To reduce psychological distress
- To reduce impulsivity
- To increase help-seeking
Design principles and content

• Evidence-based content
• Limited reading, with audio
• Colourful, engaging, brief
• Dealing with distressing thoughts
• Coping with strong emotions
• Setting goals
• https://vimeo.com/62841756
I am thinking about taking my own life.
Module 1: The storyteller

• Dealing with distressing thoughts
• Mind as story teller  https://vimeo.com/62845681
• De-fusing from thoughts
• Connecting thoughts with feelings and behaviours
• Unhelpful and helpful behaviours
Module 2: Riding the rollercoaster

Living with strong emotions

- Metaphors
- Self-soothing strategies, mindfulness meditation
- Finding meaning in the pain
- Connecting with others
Module 3: What matters?

• Identifying values and setting small goals
• Action planning
• Metaphors
Method and measures

• Participants randomly assigned to (1) ibobbly for 6 weeks or (2) 6 week waitlist then ibobbly for 6 weeks
• Safety checks every 3 weeks
• Measures administered at baseline, 6 weeks (and 12 weeks for the waitlist group):
  – Patient Health Questionnaire 9 (PHQ9) – a measure of depression
  – Kessler 10 (K10) – a measure of psychological distress
  – Barratt Impulsivity Scale (BIS11) – a measure of impulsivity
  – Depression Symptom Inventory – Suicide Subscale (DSI-SS) – a brief measure of suicidal thinking (4 items assessing
Inclusion criteria

• Be 18-35 years of age
• Not have been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder such as schizophrenia
• Experience a moderate level of psychological distress
• Not be severely suicidal
• Be willing to make contact with Lifeline or Kids Helpline
Results

• Data reported on 26 participants (pilot ongoing, 52 enrolled)
• At baseline participants reported substantial distress:
  – 64% reported suicidal thoughts in past 2 weeks
  – Mean K10 score 31.2 (severe psychological distress)
  – Mean PHQ9 score 14.7 (moderate depression, 15 = moderately severe)
• Significant difference at 6 weeks between the two groups on depression and psychological distress – ibobbly group scores dropped substantially
• Difference on the suicidal thinking measure did not reach statistical significance (too few participants? Low baseline?)
• No change on impulsivity
Depression (PHQ 9)

Baseline | 6 weeks | 12 weeks
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Waitlist | Intervention

Graph showing the decrease in depression scores over time for waitlist and intervention groups.
Psychological distress (K10)
Suicidal thinking (DSI-SS)

Graph showing changes in suicidal thinking between Baseline, 6 weeks, and 12 weeks for Waitlist and Intervention groups.
Impulsivity (BIS-11)
Conclusions

- It might work!
- Needs improvements (underway)
- Different versions, e.g. bilingual? Urban? Non-Indigenous?
- Likely to move to mobile phone version
- Larger trial 2015-2018
- Decision yet to be made re: public release date
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