

Introduction

This Bulletin presents an overview of the work and results from the project 'Predi-Nu' (Preventing Depression and Improving Awareness through networking in the EU). Predi-Nu targeted depression and suicidal behaviour and was funded by the European Union in the framework of the Health Programme from September 2011 until August 2014.

Background and project objectives

Depression and suicidal behaviour are two important and related public health problems in Europe (Lönnqvist et al., 2008). Major depression is the leading chronic condition in Europe, ranking first in terms of 'Years Lived with Disability' (WHO, 2004; WHO, 2008). Approximately 90% of all suicides occur in the context of psychiatric disorders, and the majority of these are depressive disorders (Mann et al., 2005).

Although effective treatments for mood disorders exist, there are still major gaps in the provision and availability of such resources for depression (Kohn et al., 2004). One of the main reasons for this is that the demand for effective treatments for depression is increasing, which subsequently leads to limited availability. Additional interventions for people suffering from depression are therefore needed, to complement the resources that are available. Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (cCBT) is one type of an intervention recommended for the treatment of mild to moderate depression (NICE, 2009), that has the potential to complement existing treatments for depression.



Such interventions often incorporate the concept of 'self-management'. This is an important aspect to the management of longer-term illnesses. Self-management refers to interventions and skills where patients with a chronic condition or disease can effectively learn how to take care of themselves and deal with difficult situations (Sterling et al., 2010). It has been successfully applied to chronic physical diseases (such as asthma, diabetes and arthritis) and is increasingly being applied to mental health.

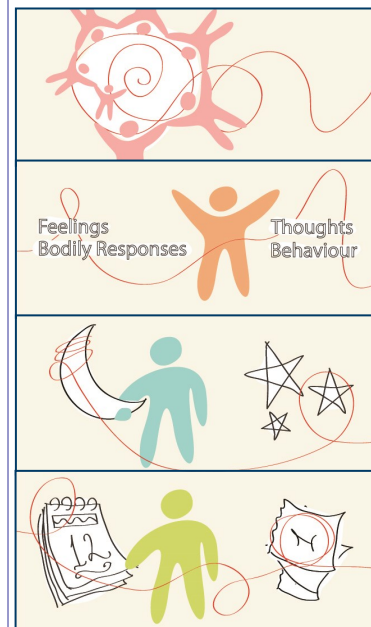


The PREDI-NU project group at the final project meeting in Brussels, Belgium, April 2014

With this mind, the Predi-Nu project aimed to promote mental health and prevent depression and suicidal behaviour through information and communication technologies.

Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Develop an online, guided self-management programme for mild to moderate depression (**the iFightDepression tool**);
2. Develop a website to increase knowledge and awareness of depression and suicidal behaviour (**www.ifightdepression.com**);
3. Implement and evaluate the use of the iFightDepression tool in a number of European countries – Ireland, Germany, Spain, Hungary, Estonia.



Research Context

PREDI-NU builds upon the experience of two EU-funded and internationally recognised depression and suicide prevention projects:

1. **European Alliance Against Depression (EAAD)**; www.eaad.net
2. **Optimising Suicide Prevention Programmes and their Implementation in Europe (OSPI-Europe)**; www.ospi-europe.com

These projects developed and used multi-level programmes to increase awareness of depression and prevent suicidal behaviour.

The work from these previous projects provided a solid foundation for developing state-of-the-art interventions based on information and communication technologies in the Predi-Nu project.

Work achieved and methods used in the Predi-Nu project

Throughout the project, all specific aims were achieved and both the iFightDepression tool and awareness website were developed. The iFightDepression tool was initially implemented in five European regions to evaluate the acceptability of the tool and feasibility of its use. The iFightDepression tool was then enhanced, based on feedback from patients and healthcare professionals. A brief summary of these steps is provided below:

DEPRESSION AWARENESS
AND SELF-MANAGEMENT
THROUGH THE WEB

PREDI NU

Preventing Depression and Improving Awareness through Networking in the EU

1. Preparatory Steps:

- Comprehensive review of existing resources and the literature on internet-based programmes based on Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy;
- Development of content for the iFightDepression tool and website, and technical programming for their placement online;
- Discussion of these materials with members of the project group, a panel of international experts and representatives from patient and family organisations;
- Development of professional depression awareness training workshops for general practitioners (GPs) and mental health professionals (MHPs).



2. Implementation Phase 1:

- Introduction of the iFightDepression tool to GPs and MHPs via three-hour training and depression awareness workshops;
- Recruitment of patients to the iFightDepression tool with subsequent guidance of patients by their healthcare professional as they used the tool.

3. Enhancement and Implementation Phase 2:

- Enhancement of the iFightDepression tool (in terms of content, layout and technical features) based on feedback from patients and professionals in Phase 1;
- Distribution of the iFightDepression results via regional events, further professional training workshops, an international symposium in Brussels (April 2014), and the go-online of the website with a virtual launch and google ad campaign.

Final results of the Predi-Nu project

Resulting from the above activities, the Predi-Nu project has produced the following main resources:

1. The iFightDepression self-management tool;
2. The iFightDepression information and awareness website;
3. Training materials for healthcare professionals interested in implementing iFightDepression and using it with patients.

The iFightDepression Self-Management Tool:

The iFightDepression tool is a multilingual, internet-based, guided self-management programme for individuals with minor, mild or moderate depression. It is currently available in eight languages (English, German, Spanish, Catalan, Hungarian, Estonian, Bulgarian and Dutch) and two versions (for adults 25+ and young people aged 15-24).

It is offered to patients via trained GPs or mental health professionals who subsequently guide and support patients using the tool. It is based on the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and includes online modules that patients can work through at their own pace. The modules are complemented by exercises to allow users to practice the skills they are learning and to encourage self-management of depressive symptoms.

The modules of the iFightDepression tool are as follows: **1.** Thinking, Feeling and Doing; **2.** Sleep and Depression; **3.** Planning and Doing Things that You Enjoy; **4.** Getting Things Done; **5.** Identifying Negative Thoughts; **6.** Changing Negative Thoughts; and **7.** Feel Better All Round: Healthy Lifestyle. The iFightDepression tool has additional optional modules for young people on Social Anxiety and Social Relationships.

iFightDepression information and awareness website

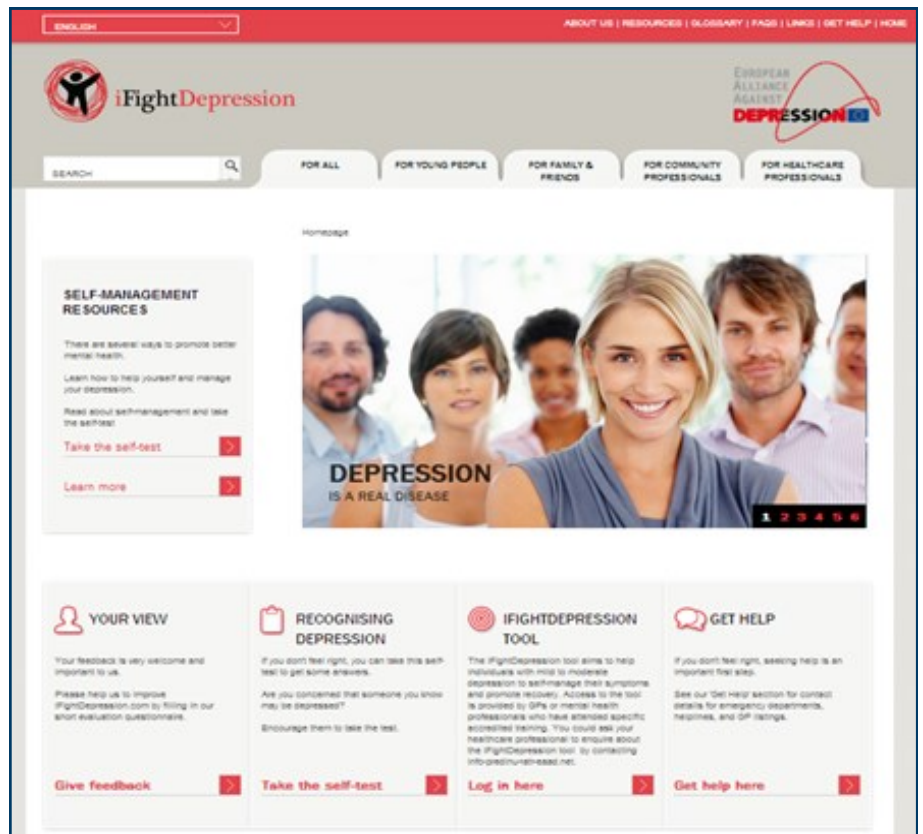
The iFightDepression information and awareness website, www.ifightdepression.com, is a multilingual website that aims to raise awareness of depression and suicidal behaviour. It also aims to improve knowledge and attitudes regarding depression and suicidal behaviour, and to promote help-seeking and mental health.

The iFightDepression website contains a service area, a short mood-rating questionnaire and the password-restricted iFightDepression tool, in addition to information on:

- Depression and suicidal behaviour
- Information on local and regional helplines and support services
- Helpful strategies for depression, including self-management resources.

The information and recommendations are tailored to specific groups: the general public, young people, family and friends of individuals experiencing depression,

community professionals and healthcare professionals. The website is currently available in 10 languages (English, German (German and Austrian version), Spanish, Catalan, Hungarian, Estonian, Bulgarian, Dutch and French).



The iFightDepression tool: benefits, use and value

Approximately 200 patients and 160 healthcare professionals from regions in Hungary, Estonia, Ireland, Spain and Germany were involved in evaluating the acceptability of the iFightDepression tool and the feasibility of its use. Results and feedback demonstrated the value of the tool and its many benefits as an additional resource for improving the care of individuals with depression:



The PREDI-NU project group at a project meeting in Colares, Portugal

- The tool is a therapeutic resource to complement existing treatment options. It can be immediately offered and used in conjunction with face-to-face psychotherapy sessions, to practice the skills learned in-session;
- It can be a first step to encourage individuals to seek professional help;
- It was highly appreciated by patients who cannot afford psychotherapy or are reluctant to spend money on it (especially in countries where psychotherapy is not offered free of charge);
- It is a helpful resource for patients who do not require long-term psychotherapy. It can also be used by individuals on waiting lists to access psychotherapy, to bridge this waiting period.
- It can be used with individuals who have recovered from more severe forms of depression and are currently experiencing mild to moderate forms of depression, as a form of relapse prevention; and
- It is likely to be helpful for patients with limited mobility due to physical illnesses or those suffering from hearing impairments.

Relevance of iFightDepression to the Health Programme of the European Commission

Predi-Nu contributed to the European Commission's Second Programme of Community Action in the Field of Health (2008-2013). Predi-Nu's objectives are in line with a number of points outlined in the "eHealth Action Plan 2012-2020", published by the European Commission in December 2012. They are also relevant to the following two of three key priorities of the EC Health Programme:

1. Promoting health and reducing health inequalities, increasing healthy life years and promoting healthy ageing; and
2. Generating and distributing health information and knowledge, exchanging knowledge and best practice on health issues.

The iFightDepression tool and website represent concrete resources that will continuously contribute to the promotion of health and distribution of health knowledge. They will also continue to be implemented in the European regions that were involved in Predi-Nu, and will be further developed by the European Alliance against Depression (a non-profit organisation dedicated to the improvement of depression care and prevention of suicidal behaviour).



The PREDI-NU consortium at the 4th project meeting in Colares, Portugal

Conclusions and recommendations

Throughout the project, the objectives of Predi-Nu were achieved with the development of the iFightDepression self-management tool, iFightDepression website, and iFightDepression professional training materials. Feedback has demonstrated that these resources are both acceptable and feasible to adults and adolescents experiencing depression, and to healthcare professionals.



The multilingual iFightDepression website allows for large-scale implementation of the tool among European citizens who do not speak languages other than their native language. It also allows them to have access to high quality, accurate information about depression. The multilingual internet-based iFightDepression self-management tool represents a major asset because in many countries the vast majority of depressed people have very limited or no access to psychotherapy at all.

While the uptake and interest of professionals was already very high in the countries involved in Predi-Nu, we realised that we would need an alternative measure to face-to-face training for wider distribution of the tool. As a result, development of an e-learning programme has commenced to assist in the future use of the iFightDepression tool in other European regions and countries. The e-learning programme for professionals will be available through the European Alliance Against Depression (www.eaad.net).

Stakeholders are encouraged to promote the broad use of the iFightDepression resources in Europe. In this context, it will be crucial to develop a framework that will enable the use of evidence-based eHealth resources, such as iFightDepression, by relevant professionals.



iFightDepression
european alliance against depression

If you are interested in iFightDepression or would like further information, please contact us at contact@eaad.net

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