European Project

Guideline for effective web-based interventions
in the field of selective drug prevention

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Centre de Prévention des Toxicomanies

Recommendations

Preliminary considerations prior to developing a WBI

- Ensure sufficient budget for the development, implementation and maintenance of a web-based intervention. Apply for funding if necessary.

- Decide what kind of web-based intervention you want to provide (website, structured intervention program, app).

- Define the specific objective for the WBI.

- Define the specific target group for the WBI.

- Consider the cultural and social background of the target group.

- Explore the needs of the target group prior to development, e.g. focus groups.

- Include a piloting phase with members of the target group to get their feedback, e.g. to find an attractive and memorable title.

- It needs to be defined which substance(s) will be addressed by the WBI.

- The WBI should be built on a theoretical foundation, e.g. MI

- Involve partner organizations and make use of existing networks

Recommendations

Several ways to involve the target group (Delphi)

- 74 % would explore the needs of the target group prior to development, e.g. through focus groups

- 53 % would let them participate in the evaluation of the WBI

- 52 % would involve them in promotion and marketing

- 52 % would include (controlled) peer support, e.g. via a forum

- 50 % would involve the target group in the actual development of the WBI

- 41 % would involve them in updating of the WBI

- 26 % would involve them in the actual implementation of the WBI

- 8 % would involve the target group in the everyday maintenance of the WBI

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Recommendations

Technical issues

- Technical experts need to be involved in the development. Clearly lay down all important details in a contract.

- Use a content management system to be able to regularly update the WBI by yourself.

- Data security and anonymity of the users need to be preserved. Apply the EU law for data protection as well as national legal regulations.

- Either use email registration or provide the users with a code to re-access their information. For online counselling registration should be mandatory.

- The offer needs to function on PCs, smart phones and tablets. Websites need to be responsive.

- Make sure that the WBI is user friendly, i.e. easy to use. Involve members of the target group for evaluating its user friendliness.

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Recommendations

Interactive elements & instruments

- Use interactive elements like tests, videos and animations whenever possible.
- To be more attractive to young people, include fun elements, like applications or games.
- Include the following supporting interactive elements:

  a. Self-test/Quiz

  b. Individual plan of change, incl. goals, steps and time frame

  c. Interactive consumption diary to protocol the user's consumption

  d. Forum (controlled peer support)

  e. Educational / serious game

Recommendations

Supporting interactive tools

- Self-test/quiz
- Individual plan of change, incl. goals, steps and time frame
- Interactive consumption diary
- Educational games
- Forum
- Pro and con lists
- Farewell letter to the substance, e.g. cannabis
- Eye-catcher, e.g. DrugDancer
- List of Danger Zones

Recommendations

Reaching young drug users

- Make your offer recognizable, e.g. by using a unique design or offering special features.

- Develop a marketing strategy.

- Involve the target group in promoting the website, e.g. via Facebook.

- Use your own organization and your existing networks for promotion.

- Try to establish links from websites of credible organizations to your WBI.

- The three following ways to reach the target group should be used:

  a. Facebook and other social networks (e.g. Google+, Instagram, and Twitter) are most promising in reaching the target group.

  b. YouTube

  c. Personal recommendation

Recommendations

Motivation to remain on a website (increase adherence)

Design, structure and usability

- Involve design in the development right from the start.

- Involve web designers and use a professional layout.

- In order to be attractive to the target group, gather feedback regarding the design during the development process.

- Include visuals on your website.

- Provide a clear structure and easy navigation.

- Do not overload the website.

- Include a user manual on how to use the program/website.

Recommendations

Motivation to remain on a website (increase adherence)

Content, presentation and general attitude

Information

- Information needs to be objective, comprehensive, accurate, short, simple and up-to-date.

- Provide relevant and solid information on substances; include risks and effects and background information.

- Offer help and advice and provide contact information of local counselling offers.

- New content should be added to the website and social media profiles at least weekly.

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Recommendations

Motivation to remain on a website (increase adherence)

Content, presentation and general attitude

Way of presentation

- Present information in multiple ways, e.g. videos, text, animation, quizzes, tests. Focus on audio-visual channels.

- Balance the text load.

- Use youth-oriented language.

- Give information in relevant national languages.

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Recommendations

Motivation to remain on a website (increase adherence)

Content, presentation and general attitude

General attitude

- The general attitude of the WBI should be acceptant and motivating but not restrictive and moralizing.

- Include risk minimizing advice but be careful about the way of communication.

- Include playful items, like (educational) games, quizzes or other applications.

- Include (ex-)consumer reports.

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Recommendations

Motivation to remain on a website (increase adherence)

Communication between user and professional

- Provide detailed individual feedback to the client's consumption.

- Communication should be accepting, motivating but not moralizing in accordance with the general attitude.

- The way of communication can be adapted, depending on the individual user.

- There are several communication channels that should be used:
  SMS, WhatsApp, Live chat, forum, videos and other visuals as well as online messages (requires user log-in).

- Replies should not take longer than 1-2 days.

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Recommendations

Motivation to remain on a website (increase adherence)

Transparency

- Information should be given about the counsellor's background, e.g. qualification, gender, age and photo.

- Information about the provider and funding of the offer should be openly available on the website.

Recommendations

Motivation to remain on a website (increase adherence)

Other factors that potentially increase adherence

- Provide the possibility to contact others that use the same program to enable social support.

- Send out regular reminders via email, SMS or WhatsApp.

- Give suggestions and strategies to the users to achieve their goals.

- Interaction with a real-life counsellor increases the probability of adherence compared with an only self-guided program.

- Offer praise and rewards via the counsellor or the system if certain goals are reached.

Recommendations

Evaluation of web-based interventions

- Already plan the evaluation process while developing the WBI.

- Continuously collect detailed data for evaluation and research.

- Use Google Analytics or another statistics tool to assess the popularity and content of the WBI.

- Gather regular feedback from the target group.

- Include the target group in the evaluation process.

- Carry out an evaluation of the intervention, ideally an RCT study.

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