

Randomized Controlled Trial

Effectiveness of a Mental Health Chatbot for People With Chronic Diseases

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Introduction

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of the Wysa mental health chatbot on individuals suffering from chronic diseases, specifically arthritis and diabetes.

Given the heightened levels of depression and anxiety often experienced by those with chronic conditions, mental health support is crucial.

The randomized controlled trial included 68 participants (47 women and 21 men, with a mean age of 42.87 years). These participants were evenly divided into a treatment group, who used the Wysa app, and a control group, who received no intervention.

Participants were assessed using three primary tools:

- Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) for depression,
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale-7 (GAD-7) for anxiety
- Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10) for stress.

These measures were taken at baseline, two weeks, and four weeks to track changes over time.

Key Findings

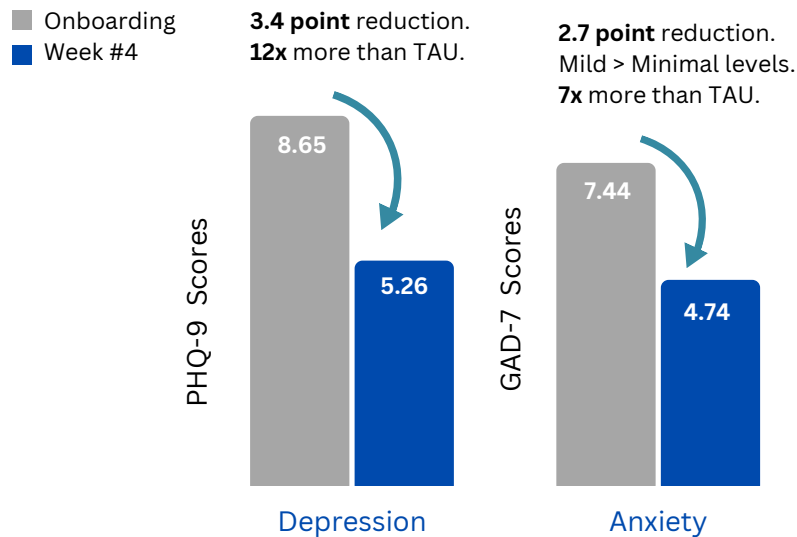
The treatment group saw a **39% decrease** in depressive symptoms over the four weeks ($P < .001$). The control group showed no significant change.

Similarly, anxiety symptom severity in the treatment group **reduced by 36%** ($P < .001$), whereas no notable changes were observed in the control group. Stress levels did not significantly change in either group.

Condition-Specific Insights

Participants with arthritis reported higher baseline levels of depression, anxiety, and stress compared to those with diabetes.

Despite the higher initial severity, both groups exhibited similar patterns of improvement following the Wysa intervention, indicating the app's broad applicability across different chronic conditions.



Clinically meaningful improvements, Wysa for Chronic Conditions
(compared to usual care/Treatment-As-Usual (TAU))

Conclusion

The Wysa app effectively reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety among individuals with chronic diseases such as arthritis and diabetes. The app was well-received, particularly for its design and features. These findings underscore the potential of digital mental health interventions in supporting individuals with chronic health conditions.

Citation

MacNeill A, Doucet S, Luke A
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