THE EFFECT OF AN ONLINE MULTIMODAL LIFESTYLE INTERVENTION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLNESS: A RANDOMIZED CONTROL TRIAL

Geraldine Przybylko, Darren Morton, Lillian Kent, Jason Hinze, Peter Beamish, Melanie Renfrew, Jason Morton.
Lifestyle Research Centre, Avondale College of Higher Education, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia

ABSTRACT:

PURPOSE: This study examined the effect of an online multimodal lifestyle intervention, which incorporated evidence-based strategies from Lifestyle Medicine and Positive Psychology, on the mental health and emotional wellness of adults throughout Australia and New Zealand.

BACKGROUND: Common mental health disorders have reached epidemic proportions worldwide (1). In the US, one in five adults have a common mental health disorder (2), and in Australia, a similar number have experienced an affective disorder in the past twelve months (3). Antidepressants are ranked in the top three most commonly used therapeutic drug classes in the US (4), and are the most commonly used psychotropic medications in Australia (5). A new paradigm is needed focusing on primary prevention to address this burgeoning mental health problem.

METHODS: 508 individuals self-selected to participate in the study and were randomized to an intervention or delay-controlled group. Both groups completed an online survey using validated instruments which assessed the participants' emotional wellness at three intervals: baseline, and at 3 months and 6 months post-intervention. 425 individuals completed the baseline assessment and entered the study (intervention n=217, control group n=208), and 359 (84%) completed the post intervention questionnaire. The intervention group participated in a 10-week online multimodal lifestyle intervention, called "The Live More Project" also known as "The Lift Project"(6).

RESULTS: Overall, the cohort was in the 'normal' range at baseline for the domains of emotional wellness measured. At 3 months, significant reductions were observed in symptoms of 'depression' (-31%, $p<0.001$), 'anxiety' (-43%, $p<0.001$) and 'stress' (-22%, $p<0.001$) in the intervention compared to the control group. Significant improvements were observed in 'mental health' (8%, $p<0.001$), 'vitality' (18%, $p<0.001$) and overall 'life

satisfaction' (8%, p<0.001). Improvements in the measures of mental health and emotional wellness were generally sustained in the 6-month follow-up.

CONCLUSIONS: This study supports the use of an online multimodal lifestyle intervention combining strategies from Lifestyle Medicine and Positive Psychology for the promotion of mental health and emotional wellness among normal populations (i.e. primary prevention). Further analyses will examine the impact of the intervention on subnormal populations to assess its potential role in secondary and tertiary prevention.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Funding: This study was funded by Adventist Health through the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Conflict of Interest: All authors declare no conflict of interest. Geraldine Przybylko is an employee of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but has no financial interest in the intervention.

REFERENCES:

1. World Health Organization. Depression and other common mental disorders: Global health estimates. Geneva: World Health Organization.; 2017. Contract No.: 13 August 2017.
2. National Institute of Mental Health. Mental illness 2017 [November 2017]. Available from: https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness.shtml.
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Mental health services in Australia 2018 [3 May 2018]. Available from: https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/mental-health-services/mental-health-services-in-australia/report-contents/summary.
4. National Center for Health Statistics. Health, United States, 2015: With special feature on racial and ethnic disparites. Table 80: Selected prescription drug classes used in the past 30 days, by sex and age: United States, selected years 1988-1994 through 2009-2012.; 2015.
5. Stephenson CP, Karanges E, McGregor IS. Trends in the utilisation of psychotropic medications in Australia from 2000 to 2011. Australian & New Zealand of Journal Psychiatry. 2013;47(1):74-87.
6. Morton D, Hinze J, Craig B, Herman W, Kent L, Beamish P, et al. A multimodal intervention for improving the mental health and emotional well-being of college students.: American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine; 2017 [updated 19 November 2017. Available from: http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1559827617733941.