TITLE: Long-Term Follow-Up Of The Brief Educational Workshops In Secondary Schools Trial (BESST) After 18 Months: A Study Protocol

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ABSTRACT

Background: Adolescent depressive and neuropsychiatric disorders have significant negative impacts on well-being. While school-based interventions are effective for younger adolescents, limited research targets older adolescents (16+ years). The Brief Educational workshops in Secondary Schools Trial (BESST) assesses the long-term impact of the DISCOVER workshop on depressive symptoms, anxiety, sleep quality, well-being, and resilience in 16-18-year-old students.
Methods: BESST is a single-blind, two-arm, multi-center, cluster randomized controlled trial (cRCT) involving 900 participants from 60 schools. Long-term follow-up extends to 18 months. Self-report measures are collected at baseline, 3, 6, 12, and 18 months post-randomization. A qualitative study with two participant groups investigates improvements (n=10) and deteriorations (n=10) based on the reliable change index in depression symptoms at 18 months post-intervention.
Results: The primary objective is to assess DISCOVER's long-term clinical effectiveness in reducing depressive symptoms at 12- and 18-months follow-up. Secondary goals include evaluating its impact on anxiety, sleep quality, well-being, and resilience, and exploring differences in meeting depression criteria between intervention and control groups. The study also investigates clinically meaningful change and moderating factors, with qualitative insights into participants' experiences.
Conclusions: This protocol comprehensively assesses DISCOVER's long-term impact on secondary school students' mental health. Findings will inform mental health support strategies in educational settings, addressing a critical gap in research for older adolescents.

BIOGRAPHY

Denis began her Ph.D. program at King's College London in September 2020, supported by a prestigious Studentship from the UK Medical Research Council. Her research focuses on preventing depression in adolescents and young adults through mental health education and cognitive behavioural therapy programs.

Denis earned a Distinction in her Master of Research (MRes) in Biomedical and Health Sciences at King's College London in February 2022. Prior to her Ph.D., Denis completed a Master-Integrated (MSci) undergraduate degree in Neuroscience at University College London (UCL) with First-Class Honors, receiving an Undergraduate Summer Studentship from the National Institute for Health Research in 2018.

Denis has extended her research beyond her Ph.D., working part-time as a Researcher at the Centre for Mental Health, focusing on racial discrimination's impact on youth mental health. She also held a consultancy role at Zinc Ventures, where she aided start-ups in the digital health sector. From March 2021 to September 2022, she served as a Research and Policy Officer at Future Care Capital, reporting on health and care developments, managing an analytics community, and aiding the development of a mental health technology commissioning tool.

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