
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

An Internet-based collaboration intervention for personal recovery: How did service users and providers address and align expectations about collaboration?

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Background and objective

Person-centered collaboration, or partnership, between service users and providers is a vital component of recovery processes. ReConnect is an Internet intervention designed through service user involvement and aims to facilitate mental health recovery processes for persons with long-term mental health difficulties in collaboration with their providers. It has a personalized “my control panel” which depicts status → process → goals. Functionality of the intervention includes support for e.g.: social support from peers through a forum; mapping life domains; coping exercises; diary, secure messaging with health providers; crisis management and medication overview. For this paper we ask: How did the service users and their providers address and align expectations about collaboration through ReConnect?

Methods:

The study is inspired by action research methodology and is conducted in collaboration with a user consultant/co-researcher. Thirty two service users and their providers at different levels of care in two Norwegian municipalities pilot-tested ReConnect for at least six months. Data from a total of three focus groups and 10 interviews with service users, and three focus groups and 7 interviews with providers, were analyzed thematically and coded in NVivo. One of the themes was preliminarily coded as *expectations towards and experiences with collaboration* and is the main source of data for this paper.

Results:

The collaboration between service users and providers varied considerably in terms of whether they addressed mutual expectations at all, how they did it, whether expectations were aligned, and the degrees to which expectations changed over the course of ReConnect use. Dyads who immediately addressed expectations upon gaining access to ReConnect, and re-addressed the issue as ReConnect’s potentials and limitations became more apparent over time, appeared to be most

satisfied with the intervention's support for collaboration. For those who did not breach the topic, use of ReConnect tended to be a source of frustration and appears to have exposed pre-existing tensions in collaboration.

Discussion and conclusion:

The introduction of a many-faceted intervention such as ReConnect into ongoing therapeutic relationships disrupts their routine patterns of communicating and working together in ways that can be both positive and negative. Although clarifying mutual expectations would seem fundamental for any collaborative relationship regardless of technology, it was not always the case in this project. Findings suggest that proactively addressing expectations is important in determining whether the intervention enhances or undermines collaboration. Future studies should explore how tools that facilitate client-oriented therapy (e.g. The Session Rating Scale and The Outcome Rating Scale) may be incorporated into interventions like ReConnect in order to prompt such clarifications as part of collaboration.

Keywords: internet interventions, collaboration, recovery
