Community pharmacy mood intervention study (CHEMIST): A feasibility study


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Background
Approximately 30% of the UK population have long-term health conditions (LTCs), increasing their risk of depression, which can worsen individual health outcomes. Milder depressive (sub-threshold) symptoms often go undetected and untreated.

Aim
The CHEMIST feasibility study explored whether community pharmacies represent a suitable setting to provide opportunistic psychological support to people with LTCs and co-morbid sub-threshold depression.

Methods
- Participants recruited through community pharmacies and GP practices
- Seventeen pharmacy staff across eight community pharmacies were trained to deliver an Enhanced Support Intervention (ESI) designed to reduce depressive symptoms
- The ESI included up to six sessions of Behavioural Activation (BA), supported by a self-help workbook, delivered over 4 months
- Study participants and ESI facilitators were invited to participate in one-to-one interviews to explore their experiences of the study and the intervention
- A focus group of pharmacy staff (n=5) was held to explore the impact of the study on routine work.

Results
A total of 11 study participants and 9 ESI facilitators were interviewed.

Pharmacy staff and study participants viewed community pharmacies as appropriate places to support people with mental health problems, enabling a non-stigmatising approach

“Ok great, absolutely great, great, because she’s [the Facilitator] friendly, she’s approachable, you know what I mean, so; and I mean that, that’s what you need because it, it, some people can find it intimidating.” (Study Participant)

The intervention made sense to both ESI facilitators and study participants

“Very, yeah. Ess, essential in fact, cos that’s a whole part of the, the, the study, isn’t it, the kind of, help the, the patient, if you will, to use the book to help themselves. So yeah, very good, kind of well set out and easy to understand.” (ESI Facilitator)

The feasibility study results have been used to refine the ESI Facilitator training, as well as recruitment and intervention materials, in preparation for the pilot trial.

Conclusion
Community pharmacies were viewed as an appropriate setting in which to deliver preventative brief psychological support to people with LTCs at risk of depression.

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