Teamwork to Develop a Website for Children of Parents with a Mental Illness

Annual Research & Policy Conference on Child, Adolescent, and Young Adult Mental Health
March 5, 2018: Tampa, Florida

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Objectives: By the end of this presentation, the participant will be able to:

1. Define “good days” and “bad days” for children of a parent with a mental illness
2. Give two or more examples of mental health content needed by children that have a parent with a mental illness
3. Give suggestions about how at risk children can be included in website development
4. Describe what is meant by the technical term, “content structure is king” in websites
Background

- Millions of children have a parent with a mental illness.
- Children live day to day with parental mental illness symptom level changes, but report that they do not have much information about mental illness and recovery.
- The children ask for information about mental illness and support for living with parental illness symptoms.
Good Days
Bad Days
Mental health literacy: What do the children know about parental mental illness?

- Very little
- What they do know is often stigmatized and inadequate
  - From YES group youth descriptions of people with mental illness
- Parent focus group - Children learn from the media
  - Why parents don’t often talk…
Early efforts to help provide mental health information to young people

- Program review
- YES program
- Website review
- Literature review
- Expert survey
- Scale development

Need surfaced for a youth-focused website

- Provide accurate, nonstigmatizing mental health literacy information
E-Mental Health Literacy

- Children need access to quality, non-stigmatizing mental health information
- Services are almost non-existent
- E-mental health may fill the gap
Action: MSU Interprofessional Teamwork

- An interprofessional team formed to build a new mental health literacy website.

- Behavioral health experts in working with children of a parent with a mental illness.
  - MSU School of Social Work

- Technology experts in website design and user experience evaluation
  - MSU Usability/Accessibility Research and Consulting
Gerstacker Foundation

- We received a grant from Gerstacker foundation for early website development.

- Purpose of the Foundation
  The Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation provides financial aid to charities supported by Mr. and Mrs. R.M. Gerstacker during their lifetimes. These charities are concentrated in Michigan and Ohio.
Action: Community-University Teamwork

- The project planning team included youth advisors.
- We wanted a youth informed project.
Methodology

- Case study of how website design process included input from teen advisors
- Interagency collaboration with community partners, mental health organizations, and schools
- Thematic qualitative data analysis of teen input from focus groups and surveys
- User experience research using online card sorting and website navigation findability (Treejack) techniques
Understanding their feeling
- Learning more

Be able to understand

Music to the videos that show different mental illness

Put famous people on the website that have mental illnesses

Don’t make stories are real and not fake

Color Splash

* Have lifetims

Stating what one has a mental illness

Links such as learn more
- Different disorders
- Family help
- Etc.

Symptoms of mental illness needs to know how to deal with them

Giving them more hope

Have a paragraph where people could talk about their problems

Listening to other people’s stories

No long paragraphs

I feel there should be a feedback page
Findings

- Teen’s recommended informational content:
  - Mental health information
  - Coping
  - How to help with mental illness
  - What happens in recovery

- Website functionality desires
  - Short blurbs
  - Videos < 2 minutes

- Website presentation
  - Attractive, but not overly colorful
  - Easy to read with pictures
  - Real-life stories and games

Content is king!
Current Status

- Website concept prototype is ready for field testing
- Each step of development has been guided by teens
- Site structure, navigation, and content are derived from teen input and design best practices
- User experience testing helped team to discover and organize website structure and content
Team challenges and successes

- Interprofessional language differences
- Knowledge base differences
- Finding youth

- Communication technicians learned about mental health
- Behavioral health experts learned new terms and processes
- Youth input was valuable
- We got things done
The future

- Keep developing site with youth input
- Go public
- Stay true to aim that site is youth focused
- Raise funds for continuing the site
Thank you!

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References


