

CLAHRC BITE

Brokering Innovation Through Evidence

How would patients with psychosis like to be in contact with a volunteer: face-to-face or digitally?



People with psychosis experience difficulties in establishing and maintaining social relationships, have less social support, and have higher levels of social isolation and loneliness than the general population.

These difficulties are not only linked with their symptoms, but also with stigma and discrimination towards them.

Importantly, patients' social isolation is linked with poor illness outcomes, both in mental and physical health.

What was the aim of the project?

We aimed to identify the extent to which patients with psychosis are interested in receiving support from a volunteer, and how their individual characteristics predict their interests in getting either face-to-face or digital volunteering.

This input would help design volunteering programs tailored to patients interests and that provide beneficial experiences for both patients and volunteers, while promoting social inclusion and cohesion.

What did we do?

A cross-sectional survey in nine community mental health teams (CMHTs) across East London.



What we found and what does this mean?

More than half of patients with psychosis had not heard about volunteering programs before.

Several patients were interested in getting face-to-face and digital volunteering support, and only a few patients did not use technology (i.e. internet, computer, phone).

The face-to-face format of a one-hour weekly meeting, with an open-ended relationship was preferred. For the digital contacts, most preferred once per week and through text messages.

Both in patients interested in face-to-face and digital volunteering, the majority wanted: i) to have a volunteer with experience of being a patient in mental health care, ii) the volunteer to be in contact with their mental health team, and iii) the organisations to contribute to the costs.

Patients who were interested in getting digital volunteering mostly wanted to make a new friend, whereas patients interested in face-to-face volunteering preferred to do more activities.

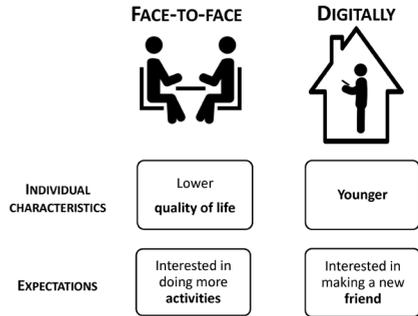
Higher loneliness and lower quality of life were significant predictors of interest in face-to-face volunteering, whereas a younger age and having less years of diagnosis were significant predictors of interest in digital volunteering.

Recommendations



The fact that nearly half of patients with psychosis had not heard about volunteering programs raises awareness that more promotion is required to increase the knowledge of these opportunities for patients in the community, providing them with the option to engage if interested.

Patients expressed interest in having open-ended relationships with the volunteers, for volunteers to be in contact with the mental health teams, and for organisations to cover expenses, which may have implications in practice and policies.



Read the paper

Pinto da Costa M et al. (2019) How would patients with psychosis like to be in contact with a volunteer: Face-to-face or digitally? PLoS ONE 14(5): e0216929.

<http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216929>

What next?

Future research should investigate the feasibility of digital volunteering targeting patients who are younger and at an early stage of their illness.

In fact, the findings of this survey together with qualitative input through focus groups with volunteers and mental health professionals has helped to develop a new complex intervention using smart-phones to connect patients and volunteers remotely.

Who needs to know

- NCVO – www.ncvo.org.uk
- Befriending Networks – www.befriending.co.uk
- East London NHS Foundation Trust – www.elft.nhs.uk
- Queen Mary University of London – www.qmul.ac.uk
- National Institute for Health Research – www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk

Find out more

VOLUME – Volunteering in Mental Health NIHR Programme Grant for Applied Research Programme (Reference Number RP PG-0611-20002).

Phone Pal – www.isrctn.com
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