

Clintouch - A mobile support technology for people with psychosis

BACKGROUND

Clintouch is both a platform technology and a stand-alone app to help people with serious mental illness (SMI) to start to manage their own symptoms. It is based around a smartphone app developed by a team of service users, leading clinical and social scientists, software engineers and health professionals at the University of Manchester.

Clintouch works by tracking people's symptoms in real time during the day, via completion of a personalised item set prompted by semi-random beeps. This takes about a minute to complete. The data are then wirelessly uploaded to a secure central server and a database rapidly built up of symptom patterns, severity and triggers, allowing users to gain increasing control over their illness. An SMS version is available. We've shown this to improve users' experience of care, and enhance collaboration with health professionals.

As well as a standalone app, Clintouch is an end-to-end clinical management system aimed at averting relapse and rehospitalisation. We are currently conducting a randomized controlled trial in two mental health Trusts (Manchester and London) to assess the feasibility of using the Clintouch app, in conjunction with integration with mental health electronic patient record systems and a web-based interface.

The main objectives of Clintouch are to empower people to better monitor and manage their own health and to try and prevent relapse and hospitalisation through the use of pre-determined and individualized early warning signs. The team has worked closely with service users, carers and healthcare workers to ensure that their experiences and needs are central to the Clintouch technology.

SMI such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder affects 2% of the adult population and costs the NHS about £3bn annually. Onset is usually in early adult life and runs a long term, relapsing course in 80% of those affected.

Despite the rise of community care, 70% of the costs of care for a patient with a severe mental disorder are on unplanned inpatient care for relapse. Relapses in people with SMI accounts for 60% of inpatient admissions in England.

THE TECHNOLOGY

- A stand-alone app helping people with SMI to better manage their own symptoms.
- An end-to-end clinical management system aimed at averting relapse and rehospitalisation of people with SMI.
- Enables healthcare providers and service users to be better connected to each other.

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KEY BENEFITS

- Formal evidence in support of Clintouch is currently being prepared as a manuscript for publication: a randomized controlled trial of the use of Clintouch in two NHS trusts with patients with serious mental illness has recently been completed.
- Service users tell us that they like using Clintouch. We've shown that Clintouch improves users' experience of care and enhances collaboration with health professionals.

APPLICATIONS

Our vision is to have two main deployment methods for Clintouch:

- A standalone app which is made available to people with psychosis, with the app downloaded from a secure site, which allows the user to monitor their symptoms and derive a summary which they can choose to share with others including health professionals.
- An app which is integrated into a care plan, involving consensual and personalised monitoring by a clinical team using clinical algorithms to detect and intervene for early signs of deterioration.

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OPPORTUNITY

The technology will be of interest to:

- (i) Patients/service users with SMI, in terms of improved experience of care, improved quality of care, empowerment and illness self-management.
- (ii) Healthcare commissioners/CCGs, as well as GPs, who are interested in innovative solutions to mental health problems.
- (iii) Mental health NHS providers. Where Clintouch is built in to client management/early warning protocols, cost savings on unscheduled inpatient care for SMI relapse will be significant.
- (iv) Academic community: to use the technology in stratified medicine studies, clinical trials.

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