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Coping with stress: Insights from an online mental health platform

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Anxiety online was a very successful online platform, created with assistance from the Australian Department of Health and Ageing. This platform was designed to diagnose twenty-one mental health disorders and to provide online treatment for five anxiety disorders. In addition, this platform has provided a database consisting of very valuable mental health data. This database has been used to validate several mental health diagnoses provided by the platform, to investigate the factors associated with attrition and to study the comorbidity patterns found in this online sample. More recently this database has been used to build a model to predict the risk of suicide ideation and to produce a personalized study of the stress management strategies of people accessing this system. In particular, using a segmentation analysis and appropriate models, it has been shown that there are strong links between certain combinations of coping strategies for stress and suicide ideation. The results confirm that more coping strategies are often used when distress or the number of mental health disorders is higher. In this address we describe some of the advantages of an online database of this nature, such as its ability to reach patients who do not seek other forms of mental health assistance and the relatively low cost of data collection. In addition we dwell on some of the disadvantages of such a database, such as the low rate of post-treatment assessment and biases in the sample in terms of age, gender and computer literacy.

Biography

Denny Meyer is a Professor in the School of Health Sciences at the Swinburne University of Technology. She is an Applied Statistician specialized in the area of Mental Health Research. Her areas of particular interest include suicide ideation, vision loss, stress and the analysis of data collected using online systems with high attrition rates. She has published more than 100 papers in reputed journals and has worked with research teams on numerous research grants and tenders.

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