

Mental health tool showcased at British Science Festival

Created 2010-09-17 13:34

On average one in four of us will be diagnosed with a mental health problem during the course of a year.

The total annual cost of mental health treatment to the UK is tens of billions of pounds due to loss of earnings and associated treatment and welfare costs.

But the cost to the individual is far greater.

If left untreated, mental health problems can lead to unemployment, homelessness, relationship and family breakups and suicide.

This week, at the British Science Festival in Birmingham, a team from Aston and Warwick universities showcased a computer program which assesses the level of risk a mental health patient may pose to either themselves or to others.

This is done by filing in the answers to a series of questions about what the patient is feeling and thinking.

From these answers the software, known as Galatean Risk Screening Tool or 'GRiST', provides the clinician with an assessment of the person's risk of suicide, self-harm, harm to others, self neglect and vulnerability.

Dr Chris Buckingham, co-developer of GRiST, explained that the development of the GRiST software was a complex process which involved sophisticated analysis of hundreds of answers given by experts in different mental health fields to identify common risks.

GRiST started out as a paper questionnaire. Humber NHS Foundation Trust was one of the first Trusts in the country to use an electronic version.

Duncan Courtney, clinical and research governance manager at the Trust, praised the tool saying: "GRiST provides a platform that for us hasn't been around before. Risk information can be clearly communicated.

"The electronic version of GRiST went live 19 July, since then 95 users have been trained and 86 more are booked in.

"We have 850 completed assessments to date, roughly 15 a day, and we expect 2515 to be completed by the year end.

"Clinicians can complete GRiST in about half an hour so it is much better than the previous tool.

"We have had very positive feedback from clinicians and most disciplines have been trained.

"The advantage of the electronic form over the paper form is that it enables modification, can be filled in by more than one person on a team and creates persistent data so the patient is not continually asked the same questions."

A new version called my-GRiST is now being developed for patient use.

"It has been ten years since GRiST's inception," explained co-developer Dr Ann Adams, University of Warwick.

“It was originally aimed at front line care, to give them the expertise to assess risk, now it is being designed for service users to self-assess.

She continued: “People find it difficult to talk about their mental health. This is made harder as clinicians use a different language, have different priorities and time pressures.

“People want to feel that they can express their thoughts clearly so that the clinician understands.”

“my-GRiST helps users to tell their story by organising information to share with others. It also enables them to speak risk language and gives them the opportunity to record their thoughts and to monitor changes over time.

“Understanding risk means users can take control and make positive risk decisions.”

[Click here](#) to find out more about GRiST and access a demonstration version.

Source URL: <http://nhslocal.nhs.uk/story/news/mental-health-tool-showcased-british-science-festival>

Links:

[1] <http://www.galassify.org/grist>

[2] <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>

[3] <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

[4] <http://www.nhslocal.nhs.uk/story/news/birmingham-hosts-major-public-science-event>