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Development of an online platform to support the self-management of symptoms and promote the wellbeing of people with cardiovascular disease (CVD)

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Conference Abstract

## Development of an online platform to support the self-management of symptoms and promote the wellbeing of people with cardiovascular disease (CVD)

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of disability & mortality. Related conditions include: coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, peripheral arterial disease and vascular dementia. These conditions can be managed but not cured. Self-management is the core of effective treatment, but can be compromised in the presence of co-morbid depression and anxiety, which is more prevalent in CVD patients than in the general population. Co-morbid depression and anxiety can also exacerbate the perceived severity of physical symptoms such as chest pain, breathlessness and fatigue; this leads to increased primary care and emergency department attendance.

Access to effective psychological treatment for depression and anxiety for people with CVD (such as cognitive behavioural therapy) is limited. Online-delivered interventions are a low-cost and non-stigmatising way of delivering therapy and self-management support and are easily accessed.

**Aims & Objectives:** Current online psychological care packages do not address the CVD symptoms and risk factors that are related to poor outcome. We will develop an online cognitive, psychoeducational and psychotherapeutic CVD-specific package to support self-management and promote wellbeing. This will improve access to holistic care while reducing costs.

The project is a collaboration between SilverCloud and King's College London, the content modules will cover:

- Symptom management (chest pain, fatigue, breathlessness and associated distress)

- Lifestyle management (to address CVD risk factors)
- Psychological distress (cognitive behavioural therapy for generalised distress)

The platform we are going to use is media-rich, web 2.0: SilverCloud has many unique features:

- Greater interactivity & feedback than existing technology
- Automated administration of measures such as the PHQ-9
- Therapist interface to review their clients
- Systems data to measure the extent of the client's engagement
- Ethical, anonymous and moderated community content
- Client enabled text messaging
- Alert for clients to complete their daily/ weekly goals

The SilverCloud platform promotes engagement by its supporter function that allows clients to share content and a supporter to respond in a personal way. The expected impacts are:

- A scalable and accessible service
- A robust system for monitoring and tracking patients' progress and clinical outcomes
- A customised, flexible and engaging self-management tool for patients

Content modules will be structured and incorporate quizzes, videos, informational content, interactive activities, as well as homework tasks and summaries.

**Results:** A focus group will be conducted in adults with a diagnosed CVD-related condition . Participants will be recruited via the British Heart Foundation. Members of these groups are likely to have a special interest in CVD and so will be able to provide expert patient opinion. The SilverCloud intervention has developed over 10 years using research informed by service users. Therefore one focus group of 6 to12 participants (allowing for drop out), will be sufficient to inform the CVD specific aspects of the intervention and is feasible in the time available.

**Conclusion:** Computer delivered therapy is effective for psychological distress. However, established generic computerised cognitive behavioural therapy packages may not be acceptable for people with co-morbid physical health problems; a solution that includes disease-specific content is needed in order to maximise health benefit.

## Keywords

**cvd; online behavioural health; engagement; psychological distress; innovation**

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