

https://dspace.org/

Health professionals' perceptions of online depression screening use in South Africa

Fadda, Arianna Tello

2023
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/36071

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

ABSTRACT

Major depression is an ongoing concern globally, especially in low-and-middle income countries such as South Africa. Specifically, the low detection rate of the disorder in the country contributes to the immense depression treatment gap and can have serious consequences for individuals and the health system. Screening tools are one preventative measure used to address these high rates of depression and the lack of appropriate receipt of treatment. However, under-resourced countries face a myriad of challenges to implementing in-person depression screening measures. In the current digital age where an increasing number of people have mobile device and internet access, online depression screening instruments are a promising solution to these challenges. The present study utilised semi-structured online interviews to gauge various South African health professionals' perceptions of online depression screening use in the country with specific reference to the online adapted Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale – Revised. A thematic analysis of the results yielded four themes: (1) the power of information, (2) barriers to online depression screening, (3) facilitators of online depression screening, and (4) living in a (virtue)al reality. The findings of the study suggest that health professionals have positive perceptions of online depression screening use in South Africa overall despite certain concerns related to cultural, contextual, and ethical factors. These findings offer important insight into the field of digital mental health in South Africa and serve to aid test developers, health practitioners, and policymakers in further refining current online depression screening instruments and ultimately closing the depression treatment gap in the country.