

Panel discussion on mental health solutions

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Black Dog
Institute

Creating a mentally healthier world.

Do apps work?

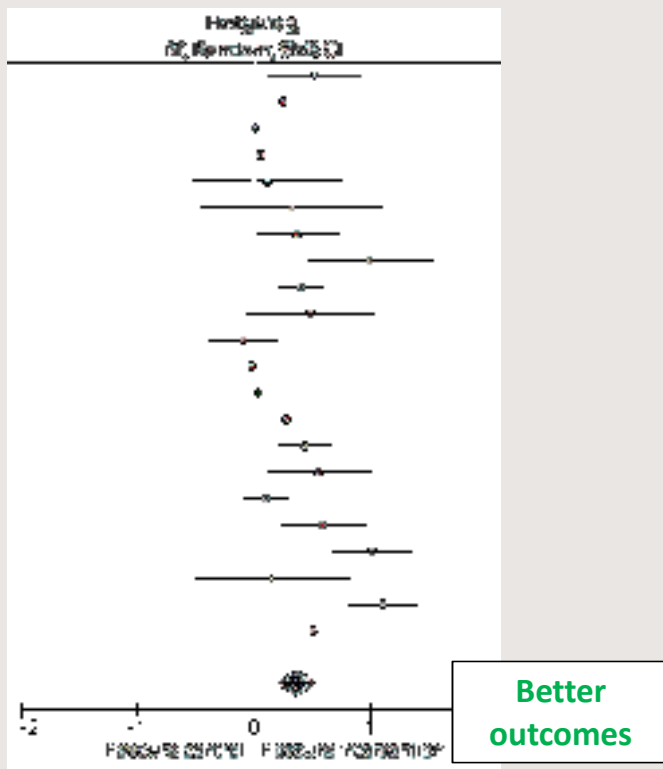
Smartphone apps for depression



Firth et al., World Psychiatry 2017

Do apps work?

Smartphone apps for depression



“Depressive symptoms were reduced significantly more from smartphone apps than control conditions”

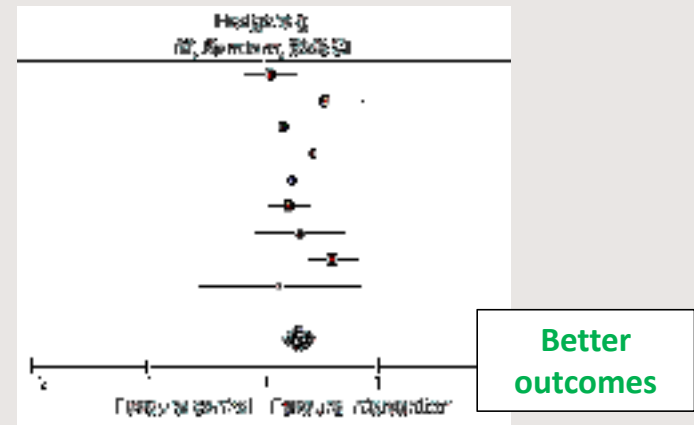
Do apps work?

Smartphone apps for depression



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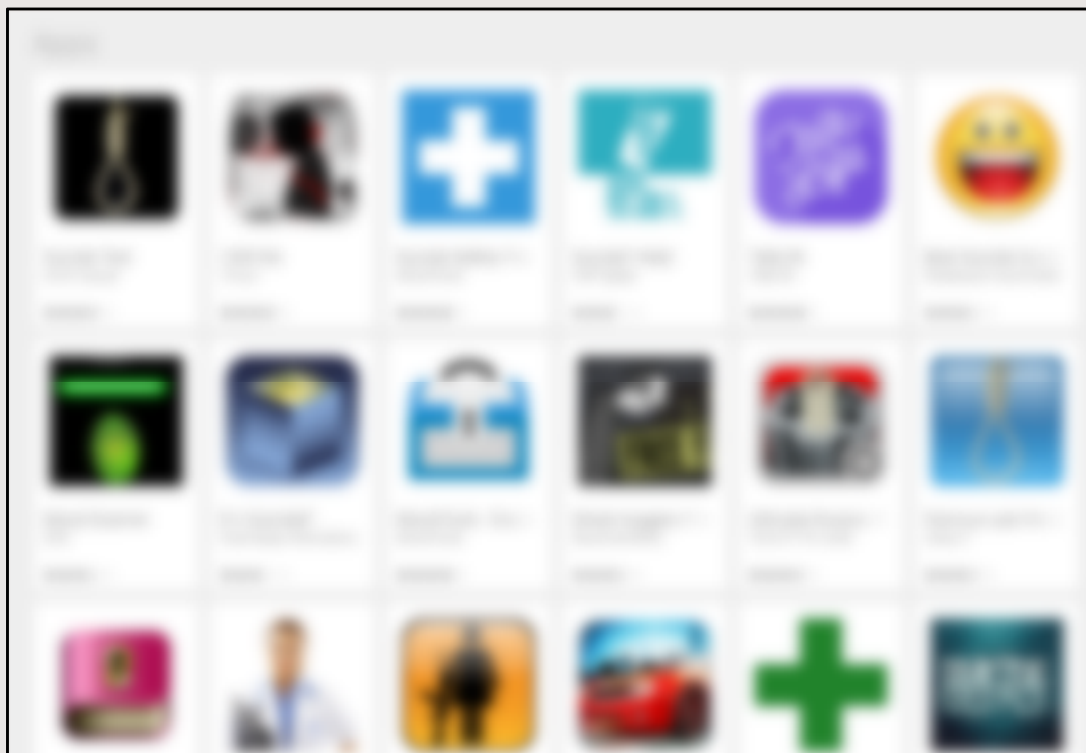
Smartphone apps for anxiety



“Significantly greater reductions in total anxiety scores were observed from smartphone interventions than control conditions”

Firth et al., J. Affect. Disord. 2017

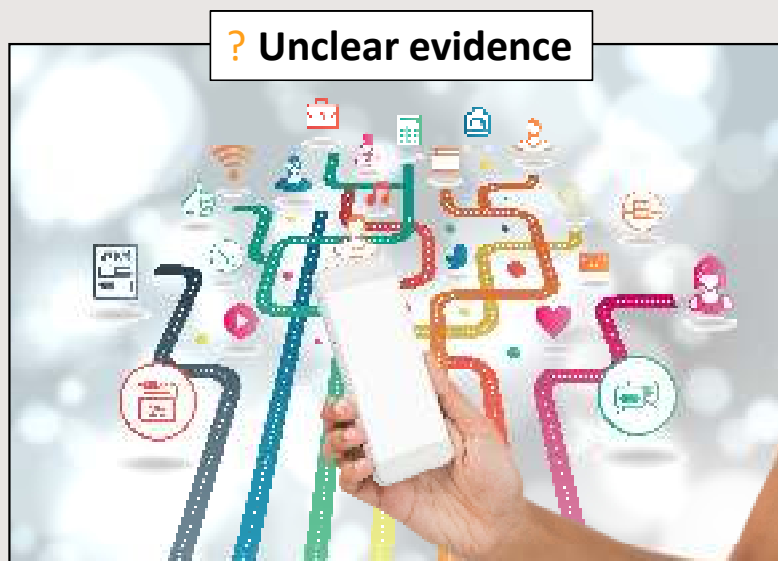
Potential for harm



- Description of lethal means
- Alcohol and other drug use
- Self-harm

Mental health apps

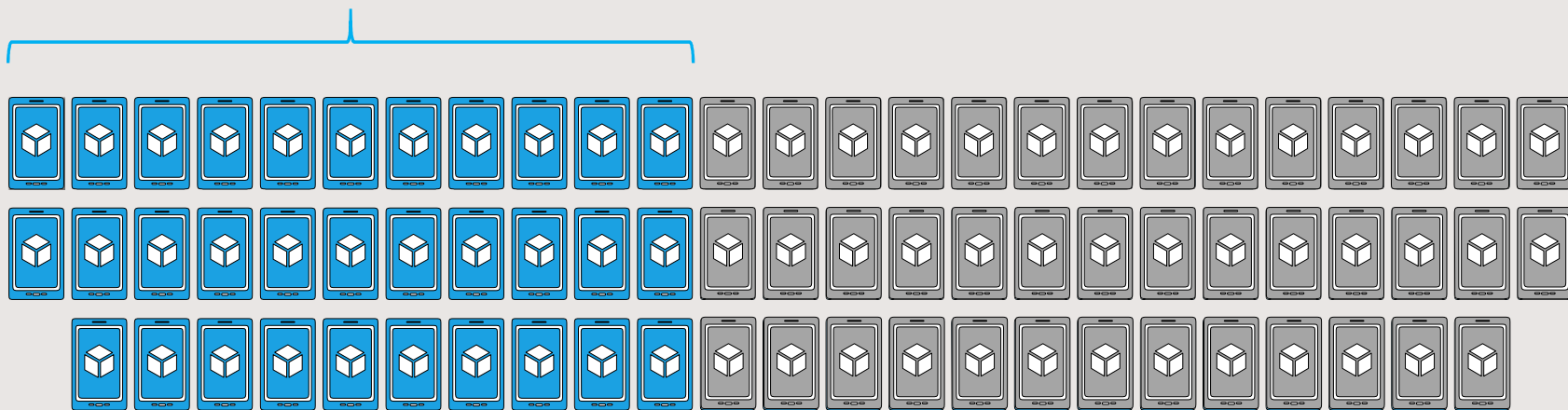
✓ Good evidence from research studies



✗ Potential for harm

Science

32 apps (44%) included scientific language



- **2 apps mentioned an evaluation**
- **1 app included a literature reference**

Scientific credibility

✓ Positive evidence

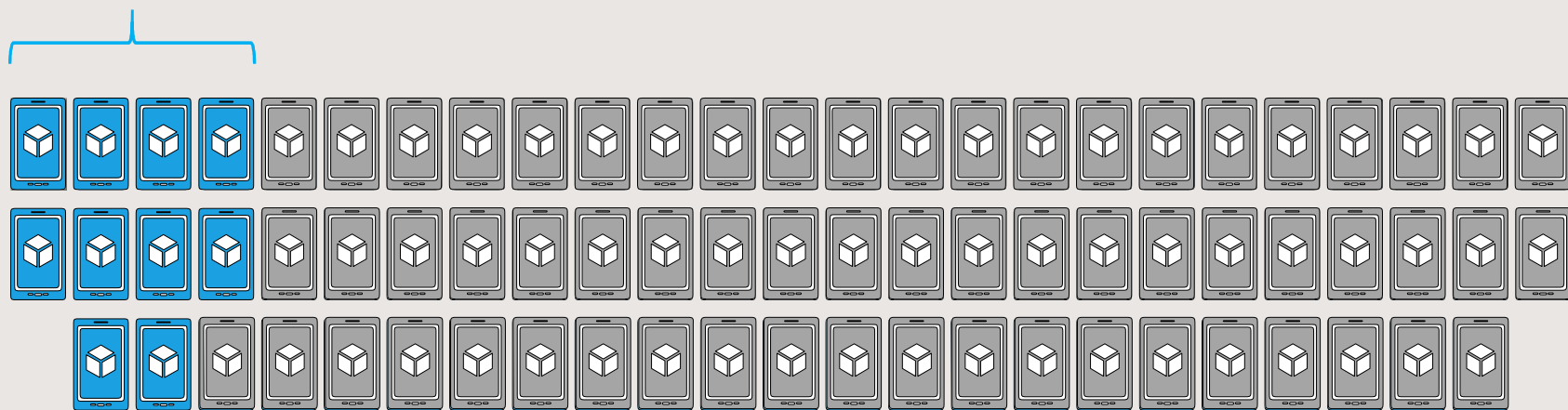
- CBT for depression (7 apps)
- CBT for anxiety (6 apps)
- DBT for self-harm (3 apps)
- PHQ-9 for depression screening (3 apps)

× No evidence found

- Binaural beats for depression (4 apps)
- Binaural beats for anxiety (3 apps)
- Brainwave frequencies for anxiety (1 apps)
- Sound waves for schizophrenia (1 apps)

Lived experience

10 apps (14%) mentioned lived experience involvement

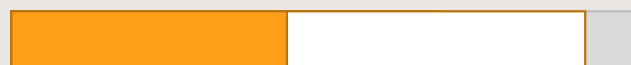


Technical findings



92% (n=33/36) transmitted data to a third party

Of those...



48% (n=16/33) transmitted a strong personal identifier



79% (n=26/33) transmitted a weak identifier



27% (n=9/33) transmitted health data



91% (n=30/33) transmitted data to one of two online providers

Summary

Some mental health apps *do* work...

... but some apps might cause harm

Not always easy to determine the good from the bad...

... but the community is working to improve our understanding

Things change rapidly!

Thank you

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