



THEME:

Health & Social Care

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MATCH FUNDERS:

Department of Health
Northern Ireland

Department of Health
Ireland

LEAD PARTNER:

Public Health Agency,
Northern Ireland

PROJECT PARTNERS

Health Research Board,
Ireland

Start Date: 01/09/2016

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 [https://
research.hscni.net/chitin](https://research.hscni.net/chitin)

 @CHITINProject

SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

Project Case Study: CHITIN Project - Student Psychological Intervention Trial (SPIT)

The Cross-border Healthcare Intervention Trials In Ireland Network (CHITIN) is a unique partnership between the Public Health Agency in Northern Ireland and the Health Research Board in Ireland, who are working together to deliver 11 Healthcare Intervention Trials (HITs). The HITs will help prevent and cure illness and promote improved health and well-being. The SPIT project is just one of such interventions: a two-phase study to determine whether a recently developed guided web-based intervention is effective in alleviating the symptoms of mild, to moderate levels of anxiety and/or depression among third level students.

In September 2019, Phase 1 of the SPIT study commenced across the four Ulster University (UU) campuses in Northern Ireland (Belfast, Coleraine, Derry/Londonderry and Jordanstown), and at Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) Donegal, with the recruitment of 1,948 first year undergraduate students. The study used an observational, longitudinal cohort study design. Baseline data was collected as students commenced university/college for the first time. Overall, 1,828 of the participants (1,468 at UU, and 360 at LYIT) fully completed the comprehensive online survey. Follow up surveys will be conducted with this cohort when they commence year 2 and year 3.



Phase 2 of the study, which will commence in Autumn 2020, will involve a pilot study and the subsequent trial of a novel, guided, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) based online intervention; developed by colleagues in Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam for those with mild to moderate levels of depression and/or anxiety. The results of the study will determine whether the addition of the intervention, to the current mental health services, would enhance the support options, and increase help-seeking among students. Phase 2 will also see the collection of



saliva samples from participating students to help analyse biological factors related to mental disorders, and examine biological changes that influence adherence, and response to the intervention. Focus groups will also be conducted with participants and staff to establish the factors that influence treatment uptake, adherence, delivery, implementation and the overall success of the online intervention.