Inspire

The internet as a setting for mental health promotion

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Youth at the United Nations

www.un.org/youth

"Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies." –

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General

"Information and communications technologies have a central role to play in the quest for development, dignity and peace." –

Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General

Public Health and ICT in developing countries

e-networking - Nairobi-based African Youth Parliament (45 countries)

- posting information on health related issues that are controversial or embarrassing for young people (STD, HIV/AIDS, Mental Health)
- sharing personal experiences amongst groups and across borders
- a network of young people in more than 45 countries

ICT-led health advocacy and education

- connecting researchers and strategists with the needs and priori ties of the field;
- connecting communities; and
- allowing access to a wider range of information on any number of health topics.

eForums

- changing perceptions of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Mental Health
- contributing to advocacy and efforts to mobilize resources for communities beyond their physical borders

SOURCE: Libbie Driscoll "*HIV/AIDS and Information and Communication Technologies*" (IRDC), November 200
http://allafrica.com/peaceafrica/organizations/org/00010249

The Australian Context

- Internet usage amongst young Australians has grown exponentially in the last decade
  - 85% of young people have access to the internet
  - 48% of households have broadband access (Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, 2005)
- The internet is becoming an integral part of day to day life
  - 40% of young people say they can't live without the internet
  - Common activities are games, homework and downloading music
  - 83% of young people have a mobile phone

Where do young people turn for advice and support?

	15-19 yrs %	20-24 yrs %
Friend	89.5	89.2
Parent/s	72.5	68.9
Relative/family friend	63.8	58.2
Internet	17.5	29.0
Magazines	13.4	9.9
School counsellor	10.4	5.9
Teacher	10.2	5.0
Community agencies eg youth worker	9.9	15.8
Someone else in your community eg doctor, minister	9.2	15.0
Telephone helpline	5.6	4.6

Mission Australia 2006
Burns et al., MJA 2007; 187: S31–S34

The potential of the Internet

- Issues that affect YP's help seeking
  - Confidentiality
  - Stigma
  - Feeling embarrassed
  - Cost
  - Access
- Online Environments
  - Empowered - choices about the type of information available
  - Anonymity - more confident talking about sensitive or embarrassing health issues
  - No geographical or physical constraints
  - 24-hour access
  - Immediate feedback

GOULD et al., J. AM. ACAD. CHILD ADOLESC. PSYCHIATRY, 41:10, OCTOBER 2002

Cyberia?

- Cybersuicide – 'individual case studies' but as Internet access has increased the rate of youth suicide in developed countries (US, Canada, NZ, UK and Australia) has declined
- Contagion – real and probable risk which needs to be managed, very little research examining the proliferation of social networking sites that allow the discussion of and/or photos, vodcasts etc of self harm
- Pornography & Pedophilia – beyond the scope of this review, however the research informing the NetAlert campaign suggests that 12% of YP seek information their parents wouldn't approve of
- Cyber bullying – direct link between bullying and depression but need to determine prevalence and interaction between online and offline victimization
- Internet addiction – growing literature, predominantly from Asia that IA is problematic although the underlying mechanisms that result in IA are not clear

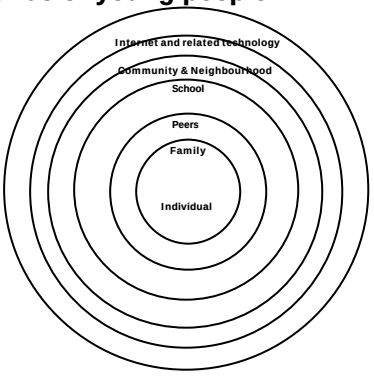
Literature under review…….

or Cytopia?

- Informed health consumer, increased mental health literacy, early help seeking
  - H. Christensen ANU
  - T. Jorm ORYGEN Research
  - M. Gould Columbia University
- Building social capital – online communities
  - UK Children Go Online (UKCGO) (Livingstone 2006)
  - The Pew Internet and American Life Project (Boase et al. 2006)
- Youth engagement and service delivery
  - Reach Out! (Burns et al. 2007, Swanton et al., 2007)
- Co-ordinated care and a clinical adjunct
  - Clinical online interventions (i.e. MoodGym , Panic Online)
  - Online facilitated forums (Webb, Collin, Burns, 2007
  - Online gaming (Re-Mission, ROC)

Literature under review…….

The worlds of young people…



*Source: John Court, Centre for Adolescent Health

The internet as a setting

- Large captive audience
  - 50% of the worlds population are under 25*
  - Young people are early adopters
- Settings approach
  - The Internet as a health promotion *setting*
  - Online *modifiable* risk (i.e. contagion and rumination) and protective factors (meaningful relationships, civic engagement, valued participation)
- Capacity building
  - Community building and information sharing
  - Professional training for clinicians and allied health professionals

*Source: United Nations Population Fund, 2003, *State of world population 2003* UNFPA, New York

The internet as a setting

- Multi-level & multi-component
  - Youth driven and owned (evidence based but the 'voice' of young people)
  - Participation and development (of a youth service)
  - Multiple entry points (text, photos, video, gamming)
- Translational – research into practice
  - Broad dissemination of evidence based content
  - Interventions shown to be effective in clinical RCT's available continuously
  - Knowledge brokers, thought leaders vodcast

*Source: United Nations Population Fund, 2003, *State of world population 2003* UNFPA, New York

What is the Inspire Foundation?

Inspire's mission is to create opportunities for young people to change their world.

Our vision is to have a global impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Services for young people 16-25

reachout.com.au

- Reduce stigma by increasing awareness and improving knowledge about mental health
- Facilitate help seeking
- Build resilience by promoting life skills such as problem solving, communication, optimistic thinking & coping

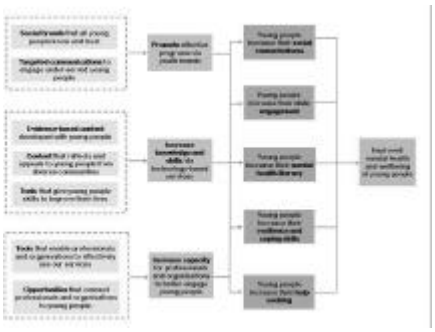
ACTNOW

- Increase civic engagement
- Promote social connectedness

beanbag

- Engage young people at risk of, or experiencing marginalisation by using creative technologies to:
  - Reduce stigma and facilitate help seeking
  - Build resilience by promoting life skills
  - Increase civic engagement
  - Promote social connectedness

Inspire Program Logic



Policy Implications: The Net Alert Campaign

- A Snapshot of the Online Behaviour and Attitudes of Children (Wallis Consulting Group 2007)
  - over half of 11–15 year olds who chat on line are contacted by strangers
  - almost half of 11–14 year old children had viewed websites their parents would find alarming.
- The statistics were used in the NetAlert campaign and in the NetAlert information booklet that was sent to every household in Australia.
- The NetAlert campaign warned of the **risks** to children and teenagers online and introduced safety filters, suggested bans on MySpace etc

An alternative lens

- **Who are young people chatting to online?** When young people were asked who they chat to or message with online, respondents said their communication was mostly with friends (96 per cent), friends of friends (31 per cent) or people met online who their parents had said "it is alright to talk to" (20 per cent). Only 14 per cent of survey respondents chat or message with "just a mixture of people including strangers."
- **What 'sort of things' are young people doing online?** When young people were asked what sort of things they do on the internet, they cited looking "for information for homework or study" ahead of all other activities, including playing games, chatting and messaging.
- **Do young people have strategies to stay safe online?** The survey revealed that well before the NetAlert campaign almost three quarters of parents had already talked to their children about "keeping safe online". Young people cited their 'greatest concern' as 'the computer getting a virus'
- **What is the difference between unsupervised chat rooms and more popular forms of online communication like instant messaging and social networking?** Chat rooms are completely different to chatting online, which is more likely to involve instant messaging or communication on sites like MySpace, Bebo and Facebook.

Further Information

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