HEAD COACH

INFORMATION SHEET

BACKGROUND

The prevalence of depression and anxiety among Australians is high and often goes unrecognised, despite the substantial labour cost of mental illness in Australia (estimated to be $49 billion).

Supervisors hold a key leadership responsibility in managing and enhancing the welfare and mental health of their staff. Clear guidelines have been made available outlining the role managers should play in sickness absence, regardless of the underlying cause, and research has found that good supervisor support can result in faster recovery for employees and a more rapid return to work. However, managers often report feeling unsure what to do when a staff member is ill, particularly if they are suffering from a mental illness. This is problematic as mental health is increasingly becoming the leading cause of sickness absence in the workplace. These problems are amplified in male-dominated industries, which are often characterised by a culture that makes discussing emotions difficult or impossible.

New technologies offer an efficient way to address these challenges by offering flexible, user directed options for managers to develop their skills in this area. Evidence suggests that specialised training for managers to promote understanding of mental health problems among workers can allow managers to feel more confident in discussing mental health matters, however, there has been little research on implementing this type of training online. **That's where HeadCoach comes in**.

WHAT IS HEADCOACH?

HeadCoach is an online mental health training program for managers which aims to help managers in male-dominated industries better recognise and understand mental health in the workplace, and highlight what managers can do to promote and maintain optimal employee well-being and productivity. The program is desktop, tablet and mobile responsive, designed to allow users to complete it at their own pace and when convenient for them across a 6 week time frame. HeadCoach has been designed by industry experts in mental health including psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.

WHY DO WE NEED INDUSTRY PARTNERS?

While this new product is based on the best available research evidence, we need to check that it works in real world situations.

WHAT TYPE OF TRIAL IS THIS?

The type of trial that is being conducted is referred to as a cluster randomised controlled trial. Randomised controlled trials are the gold standard of evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention. As the name suggests, this trial involves randomly placing clusters of managers and their direct reports (in this case work zones or regions) into one of two conditions; treatment or control. A control is used as a point of reference and we use this to see what the treatment does relative to this control. In this current trial, the intervention group, who will receive the HeadCoach program immediately, will be compared with a waitlist control group who will receive HeadCoach 6 months later. Conducting this type of trial means that we can be more confident in our conclusions.

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HOW DO YOU EVALUATE THE APP?

In this current trial we will be gathering data about managers' knowledge and attitudes about common mental health problems, their own symptoms, their understanding of their role as a manager in dealing with mental health in the workplace, their confidence and current practices in managing mental health issues in the workplace, and management styles. This data will be gathered before and after (immediately and 6 months) the trial.

We will also gather data from employees about their levels of well-being and psychological distress, rates of absenteeism and perceived level of social support at work from managerial staff. This will be collected in short questionnaires before and 6 months after the trial.

This data will tell us a number of things, including

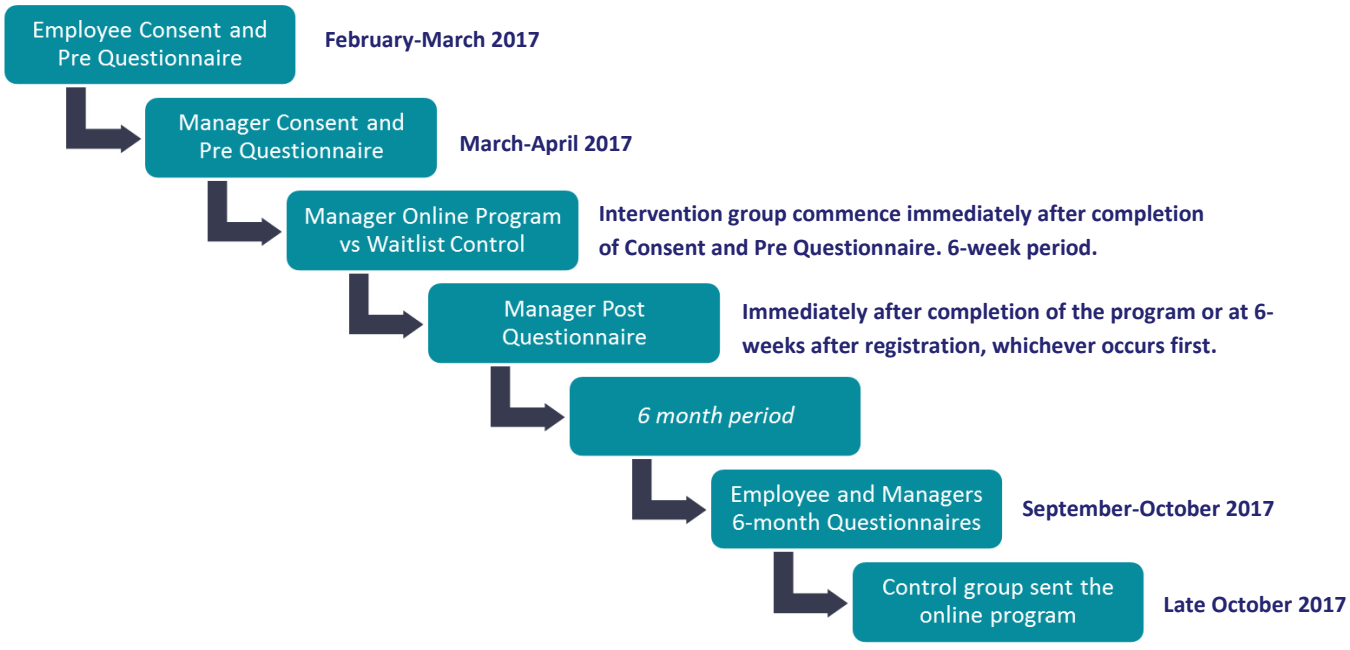
- The mental health of involved employees
- The knowledge, attitudes and practices of involved managers
- How effective was the app at improving managers' attitudes and behaviour
- How effective was the app at improving employees wellbeing and absenteeism

ETHICS & CONFIDENTIALITY

All project components go through a rigorous UNSW human ethics committee evaluation before being allowed to proceed.

Data collected during the trial will be anonymous. All data collected will be stored on password protected servers. Access will be restricted solely to the investigators. All records will be identified by a unique study number only. Rigorous data encryption will provide the highest level of data security. No information will be published on individual cases, with all published data being aggregate group data. For confidentiality and to avoid duty of care commitments, no individual data will be fed back to the organisation.

TIMEFRAME



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