Orygen Youth Health Research Centre

RE-FRAME-IT: The development of a randomised controlled trial testing an e-health intervention on suicide risk among school students

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Background

Suicidality is common among young people [1-5] however there are few well designed studies testing interventions specifically among at-risk youth [6].
The development of e-health interventions have potential, yet despite some success treating depression and anxiety [7,8] their potential to reduce suicidality in youth remains unexamined.

Aims / hypotheses

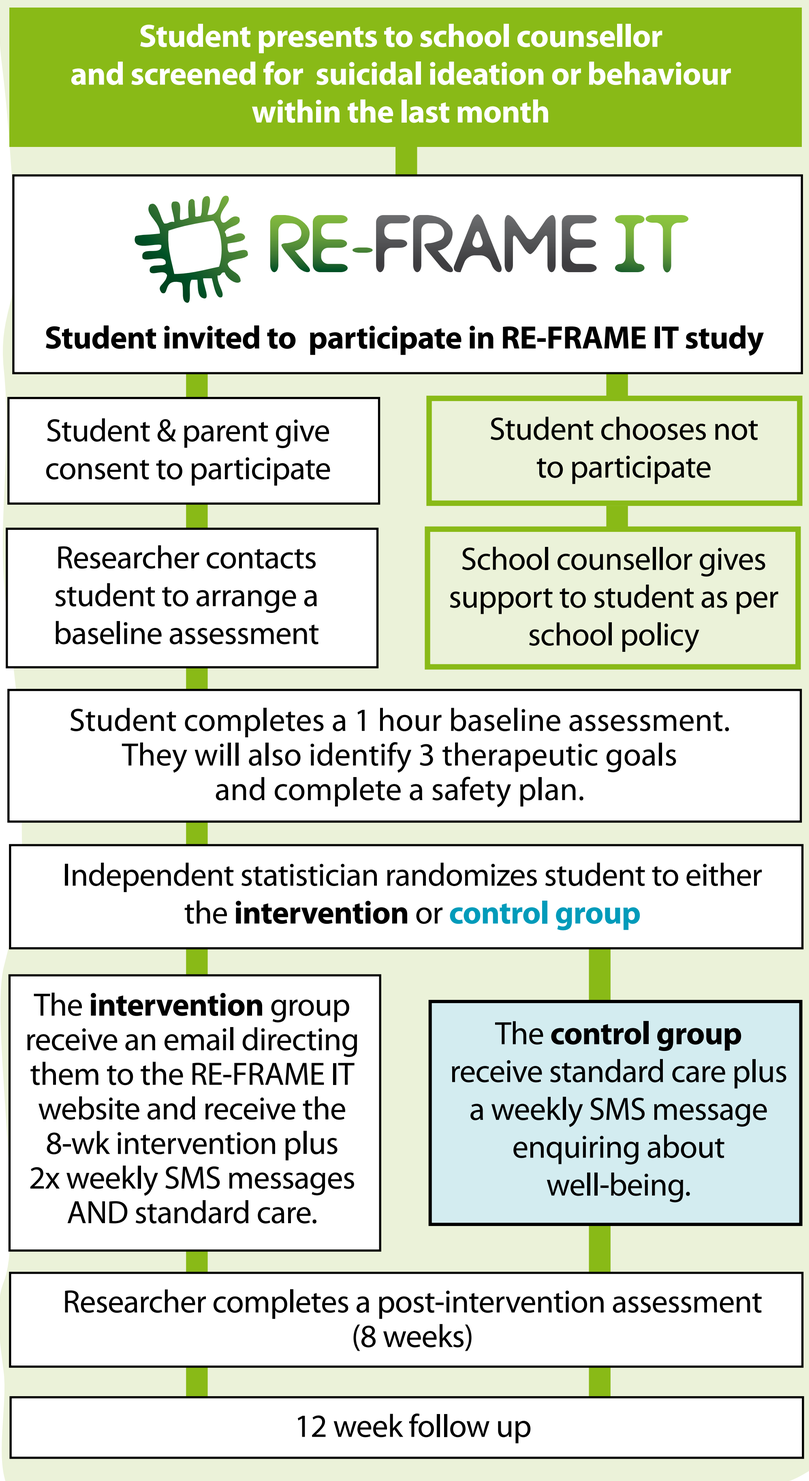
Hypotheses are that the intervention will:

1. Reduce SI and / or DSH among participants
2. Reduce symptoms of depression, anxiety and hopelessness
3. Increase help-seeking
4. Improve coping and problem solving skills
5. Participants will find the receipt of this intervention acceptable, and
6. The intervention will not cause undue distress.

Methods

Design / setting: A randomised controlled trial conducted by Orygen Youth Health with government high schools in North West Melbourne.

Participants: 165 secondary school students in year 8-12 who have presented to the school welfare team for support with recent SI or DSH.



Assessment schedule: Participants will be assessed at baseline and post intervention (8 weeks) using the following:

- Demographic information and treatment history will be collected using a specifically designed questionnaire
- The Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire Junior [16].
- The Self-Harm Behavior Questionnaire [17]
- The General and Actual Help Seeking Scales [18]
- The Children's Depression Rating Scale [19]
- The Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale [20],
- The Multidimensional Anxiety Scale for Children [21, 22]
- The screening questions for Borderline Personality Disorder from the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-IV Axis II Personality Disorders [23].
- The Beck Hopelessness Scale [24]
- The Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations [25]. These constructs are being measured in order to determine whether or not they impact upon levels of suicidality
- The Profile of Moods States [26] and a series of specific questions asking young people if they found the content unduly distressing.

The intervention: a personalized web-site which will deliver 8 modules of psychological therapy, employing a cognitive behavioural approach, over an 8-week period. The modules will cover the following:

- **Week 1: Introduction / engagement and agenda setting**
- **Week 2: Emotional recognition and distress tolerance**
- **Week 3: Identification of automatic thinking**
- **Week 4: Behavioural activation: help-seeking**
- **Week 5: Behavioural activation: activity scheduling (including relaxation techniques)**
- **Week 6: Problem solving: specific focus on self harming or SI**
- **Week 7: Detecting & challenging problematic thinking and cognitive restructuring**
- **Week 8: Wrap up and review**

Format: Each participant will have access to their own personalized web-page via a secure log-in process. The website will be hosted by a real person talking to the viewer. They will introduce the site and provide the therapeutic content. There will also be a series of characters (young adult actors) who will provide a video diary (vlog) each week describing their problems with schoolwork or their friendships or parental relationships. There are 2 male characters and 2 female characters, one each in years 9 to 12.

Each participant will also have a message board to communicate with the research team. There will also be an activity or a game (e.g. a mood diary) that will reinforce the learning objectives each week. This will be sent back to us via the site and it will be reviewed by a member of the research team who will moderate the website and provide individualized feedback to each participant.

SMS messages will also be sent twice a week for 8 weeks, the first just as the new module is uploaded and the second following their completion of the module.
The control group will receive SMS messages enquiring about well-being.

Safety: The website will be moderated by a clinical psychologist and participants will be assessed weekly for risk.

Timeline

2010	***Study development***
2011 Jan – July	***Piloting***
Aug 2011 – Aug 2013	***Recruitment (2 years)*** ***Deliver intervention (8 weeks)*** ***Baseline and post-intervention assessments***
Sept 2013 – March 2014	***Data verification, analysis and write up***

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