

Internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy for  
subthreshold depression in people over 50  
years old: A randomized controlled clinical trial  
Post-treatment & one-year follow-up results

Viola Spek, Ivan Nyklíček, Niels Smits, Pim  
Cuijpers, Heleen Riper, Jules Keyzer, Victor Pop

## Introduction

Subthreshold depression: symptoms of depression, but not enough to meet the DSM-IV criteria for major depression

## Introduction

- The prevalence of subthreshold depression is 8-16% in people over 50 years of age
- Subthreshold depression is clinically relevant: in psychosocial functioning people with subthreshold depression are comparable to people with a major depressive episode
- Subthreshold depression is a risk factor for developing a major depressive episode

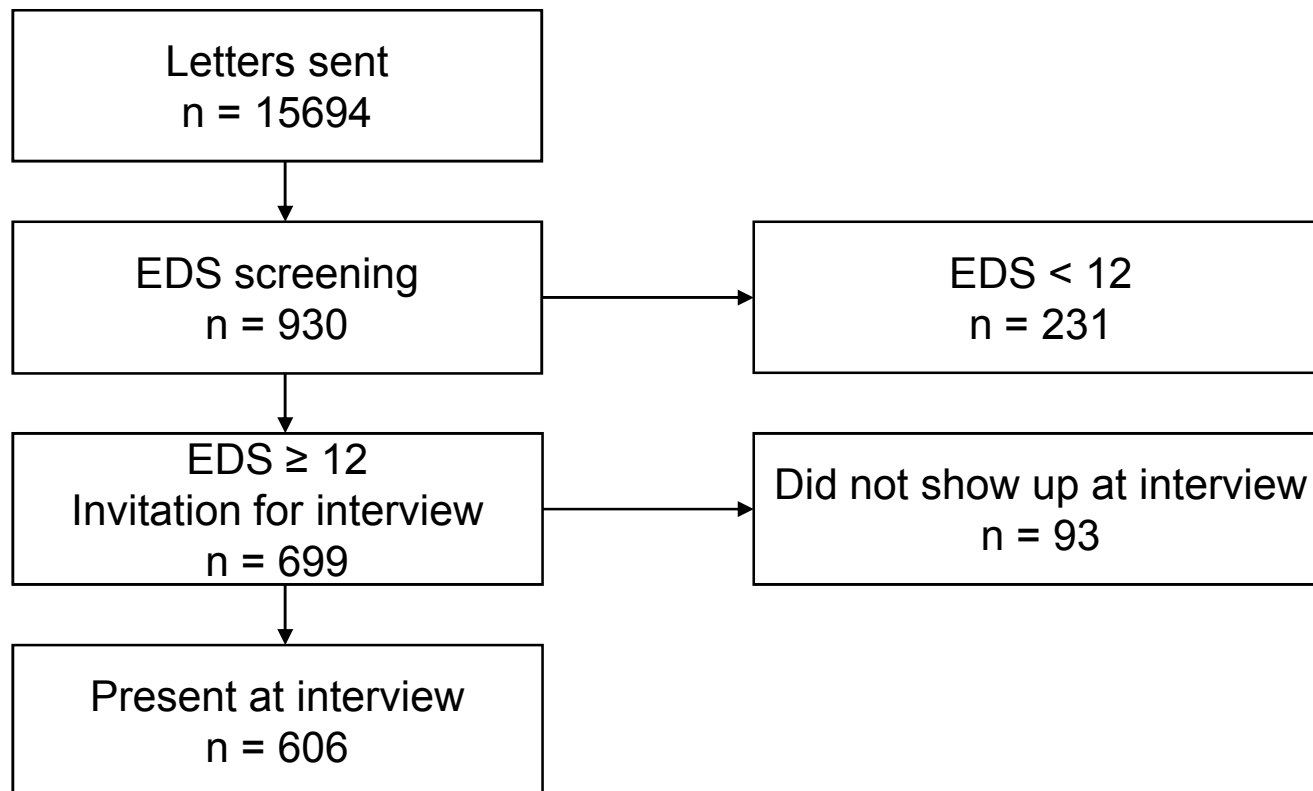
## Aim of the study

To compare a newly developed internet-based treatment to an evidence-based group treatment and to a waiting-list control condition.

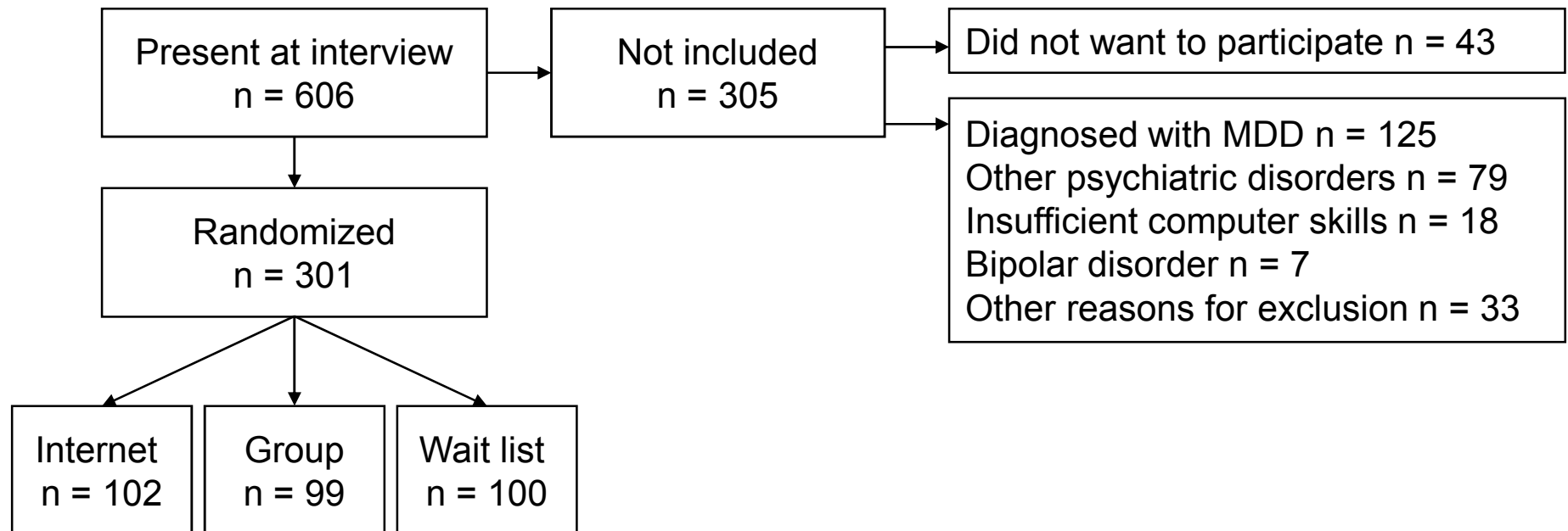
## Participants

- 191 women and 110 men
- Mean age = 55 years (SD = 4.6)
- Subthreshold depression:  
EDS > 12, but no DSM-IV diagnosis of depression

# Participants



# Participants



## Procedure

- EDS
- Face-to-face interview, including CIDI
- Randomization
- Baseline assessment
- Intervention (or waiting-list)
- Post-treatment assessment after 10 weeks
- One-year follow-up



# Interventions

## Group cognitive behaviour therapy

- 10 group sessions with homework
- Evidence-based treatment
- Based on Lewinsohn's Coping With Depression course

## Interventions

### Internet-based cognitive behaviour therapy

- 8 modules with homework
- Treatment at home
- Self help, no support from therapist
- Based on Dutch adaptation of Lewinsohn's Coping With Depression course

# Analyses

- Contrasts
- Effect sizes
  - Improvement within groups
  - Difference between groups
- Minimal Important Difference

## Results

- A mean of 98% of the sessions of group treatment was completed
- A mean of 78% of the modules of internet-based treatment was completed
- 95% of participants completed group treatment
- 48% of participants completed internet-based treatment

## Results (post-treatment)

First contrast: do the two interventions differ from the waiting-list?

Second contrast: do the two interventions differ?

First contrast: significant difference between the waiting-list and the two interventions ( $p = 0.04$ ).

Second contrast: the two interventions do not differ ( $p = 0.62$ ).

## Results (one-year follow-up)

First contrast: does internet-based treatment differ from the waiting-list?

Second contrast: do the internet-based CBT and group CBT differ?

First contrast: significant difference between the internet-based treatment and the waiting-list

( $p = 0.03$ ).

Second contrast: the two interventions do not differ

( $p = 0.08$ ).