

Online interventions in a post-disaster context: Using BRAVE-ONLINE to treat anxiety and stress following the New Zealand earthquakes

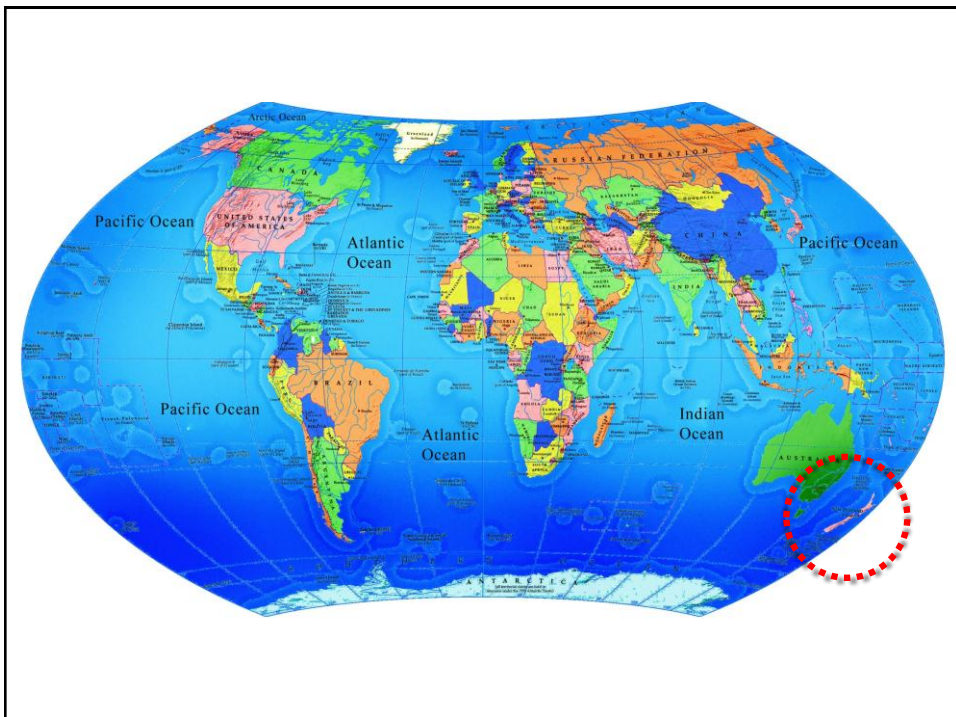
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12:51 on 22 February 2011, magnitude 6.3







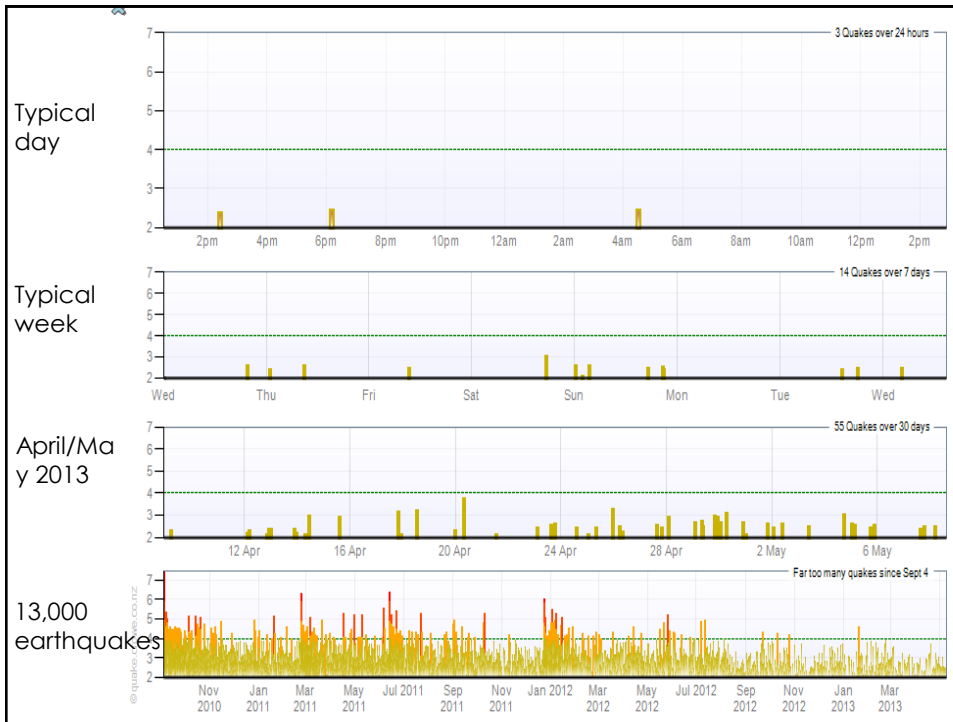
**So what about e-therapy
in a post-disaster context?**



BRAVE NZ study

- Open trial (N=40)
- Outcome measures matched to Australian trials
 - Baseline and 6 month follow-up assessments face to face
- Referrals through Christchurch general practitioners and school nurses
 - Higher acuity?
- Ongoing support from our Australian colleagues

1. The aftershocks are frequent and unpredictable



The aftershocks reignite fear

- Continuous aftershocks prime the brain for fear and reactivate the fear networks
- Mental health problems emerge 18-24 months later
 - Separation anxiety and weather phobias are common

2. Daily life is full of hassles



Doing therapy online is one less hassle to deal with

- Road closures, loss of accommodation, loss of employment, financial problems, school merges, lack of community facilities...
 - But electricity and communication services function well
- Attending traditional therapy – another hassle?
 - Online therapy – easier than you'd think?

3. Health system is overloaded



Online therapy takes the pressure off the health system

- Significant increase in ill mental health (anxiety, depression, PTSD, substance abuse)
 - Domestic violence
 - Gambling problems
 - Physical ill health
- Cannot deliver traditional services to everyone but online therapy can help



4. BRAVE Online improves function

- 8-10% of the population have significant PTSD symptoms
 - Participants fear coming to the city (clinic set up on the ground floor)
- BRAVE Online doesn't target PTSD
- NZ participants overcome anxiety and show improved function
 - If PTSD symptoms remain we make referrals for trauma focused CBT

What next?



