

Vocational recovery RCT

Young people with borderline personality disorder (BPD) often have difficulty attaining and maintaining engagement in education and/or employment, despite having the desire to do so. BPD is more strongly associated with unemployment and receipt of disability welfare payments than anxiety or depression. Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is a client-driven vocational service model that assists individuals to engage with education or employment appropriate to their personal goals, and provides ongoing support to maintain this engagement. The objective of the Individual Vocational and Educational Support Trial (INVEST) is to investigate whether IPS improves the vocational outcomes in young people with BPD features compared with what is currently routinely offered as part of clinical care (i.e. usual vocational services (UVS)).

Methods

INVEST is a single blind, parallel, randomised controlled trial (RCT) of IPS compared with UVS, with a 52-week primary endpoint. Youth aged 15-25 years with between 3 and 9 BPD criteria and a desire to study or work will be recruited from the Helping Young People Early (HYPE) program at Orygen Youth Health in Melbourne, Australia. Participants will be randomised to either IPS or UVS, which they will receive for 39 weeks, alongside standard HYPE treatment. They will be asked to complete five research interviews, at 0, 13, 26, 39 and 52 weeks. In addition, participants randomised to receive IPS will have contact with an IPS specialist. The primary outcome measure is number of days in mainstream education/employment since baseline. Secondary outcome measures are cost effectiveness of the intervention, quality of life, and BPD severity.

Discussion

IPS has been successfully utilised in adults with severe mental illness, and youth with first episode psychosis (FEP), but no randomised controlled trial has investigated its effectiveness in young people with sub-threshold or full syndrome BPD. Successful IPS in this group would demonstrate improvements in education and employment outcomes, evidenced by more days engaged in education/employment since baseline than the UVS group.