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Using mobile phone technology to contact and support students with mental health problems in third level education.

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Introduction -Mobile phone technology has become an integral part of peoples' lives. It has changed how we interact with each other and how we access information. This paper describes how mobile phone use in particular text messaging has been used to communicate and support students with mental health problems attending a third level institution within Ireland to manage their academic and social lives.

Objectives - The objective of this study was to explore the use of mobile phone technology to support students with mental health problems attending the Unilink Service (an occupation-based support service) in the University of Dublin, Trinity College.

Methods - This study was descriptive, non-experimental and predominantly qualitative in nature. It employed a mixed-method approach, by way of: 1. Collecting text messaging data, relating to 40 students, from four therapists across three years, and 2. auditing the service files to gather demographic data and some intervention-related information that was cross-analysed with the qualitative text messaging data.

Results - Thematic analysis of the data using QSR N6 produced five over-arching themes - 'practicalities around appointments', 'condition/illness management', 'progress: academic and personal', 'non- therapeutic interaction', 'thanks, but I'm fine'.

Discussion - This study showed that text messaging amongst a student population using a mental health support service was valuable. It offered a means of maintaining ongoing contact between the service users and the staff and acted not only as a means for receiving and giving information but as a means of maintaining the ongoing therapeutic relationship.