Effect of childhood emotional maltreatment on brain development: DTI study
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Several studies have shown that exposure to childhood abuse is associated with alterations in brain structure and function. We sought to ascertain whether childhood emotional maltreatment such as parental verbal abuse, witnessing domestic violence was associated with abnormalities in white matter tract integrity using diffusion tensor imaging. First study explored 16 unmedicated subjects with history of high-level exposure to parental verbal abuse but no other form of maltreatment and 16 healthy control subjects, showing abnormalities in arcuate fasciculus, cingulum bundle, and the fornix, which were associated with verbal IQ and many psychiatric symptoms. The second study included 20 subjects who had a history of high-level exposure to parental verbal abuse but no other form of maltreatment and 16 healthy control subjects, showing abnormalities in arcuate fasciculus, cingulum bundle, and the fornix, which were associated with verbal IQ and many psychiatric symptoms.

Using technology to deliver interventions

Sparx: A fantasy based game to treat depression
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By the age of 19, one in five adolescents will have suffered from a depressive disorder; however, most do not receive treatment. Computerised therapy has the potential to help adolescents with depression because this form of treatment can be delivered flexibly and at low cost. SPARX is an interactive 3D fantasy game designed to deliver cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in a computerised format (CCBT). It was developed with the help of young people. SPARX was designed for 13 to 18 year olds with mild to moderate depressive symptoms and it has been formally evaluated in a randomised controlled trial (RCT) comparing CCBT with treatment as usual (TAU) in 24 sites in New Zealand (n = 187). The results of the RCT have shown that SPARX is at least as effective as usual treatment where trained therapists delivered TAU. This presentation will provide a brief overview of the development of SPARX and the results of the RCT before discussing user feedback and allowing workshop attendees to use SPARX.

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