

WHAT DO ADOLESCENTS KNOW ABOUT DEPRESSION? EFFICACY AND UTILITY OF AN INFORMATION BOOKLET

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Introduction: Adolescents still lack knowledge about depression and its treatment. As a result, depressed adolescents are confronted with stigmata that are barriers to treatment-seeking. Studies in adults demonstrated that depression literacy can be increased by educational material.

Objectives: We developed an information booklet on depression specifically addressing adolescents aged 13 to 17. For the first time, it was examined whether knowledge about depression in youth can be enhanced by reading an educational leaflet.

Methods: The information booklet was evaluated in 628 German ninth graders ($M = 15.1$ years, 58% boys) in a pre-post-follow-up design. Using study-specific questionnaires, knowledge about seven topics on depression was assessed. Key subjects were symptoms and treatment of depression as well as suicidality. In addition, students evaluated the booklet's layout, content and utility.

Results: Power-analysis of the pre-post-follow-up-comparison yielded effect sizes of knowledge enhancement between $\eta^2 = 0.07$ (medium) and 0.56 (large) for all topics of the booklet. The largest effect sizes were found for the topics "symptoms" and "antidepressants". Sub-analysis on school types and gender showed the highest increase in knowledge in well-educated students and in girls. The participating youth assessed the booklet positively regarding all categories, with a mean overall-rating of 2.15 on a scale from 1 (very good) to 6 (fail).

Conclusions: Although students' baseline knowledge about depression was good, girls and boys of all school types significantly increased depression literacy. Thus, the booklet can help reducing stigmata and treatment barriers in adolescents.