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United States Academic Libraries and Mental Health

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Abstract

Purpose of Research

As academic faculty report being emotionally exhausted and students, ranging from undergraduates to graduates, report a constellation of mental health conditions, both preexisting and those apt to develop during the college and university years, the academic library becomes a source of mental health self-care resources.

Mental health self-care resources include general mental health resources, e.g. mental health professional organizations, as well as short explanations of selected mental health conditions academic library personnel are apt to encounter in the academic library setting due to the age group of traditional undergraduate college and university students and the increasing age of college and university faculty and staff.

Results of Research

The results of the research are quite simple: the identification of selected free mental health resources from the internet and the development of brief snapshots of selected mental health conditions briefly detailing what the mental health conditions and what internet-based resources are freely available.

Major Conclusions

Major conclusions include recommending that mental health condition snapshots be commonly used by academic libraries as mental health resources and be adjunctive to general mental health resources. Additional studies would be needed to determine if both general and condition specific mental health resources provided by the academic library are helpful in addressing the academic community mental health concerns in the long run or in the short run. Future studies address various issues such as the safety of using free mental health electronic resources and may take various forms, e.g. longitudinal studies.

Keywords: Mental Health, Academic Libraries, College, Universe

Introduction

As the National Education Association reported in 2024 that "33% percentage of faculty and staff are often or always physically exhausted" and "38% of faculty and staff are often or always emotionally exhausted", academic libraries should consider the emotional well-being of academic library and staff when selecting academic library self-help mental health resources. Also, Pedrelli, et. al. (2015) reported that approximately 11.9% of college students suffered from anxiety, had preexisting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), many experienced Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and or generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) during their college years and or eating disorders during their college years [1]. Given the breadth of mental health conditions among all members of the academic community, especially undergraduate college and university students and that the academic library is what the Arts Council of England and other organizations call a community hub in that academic libraries are a connection to other campus and external sources, e.g. mental health resources freely available on the internet.

Mini Snapshots of Free Internet Resources on Selected Mental Health Conditions for Academic Libraries and the General Academic Community

The goal of the mini snapshots of free internet resources on selected mental health conditions is to educate colleges and universities on what freely available mental health resources there are out there as well as to provide general education as to common mental health conditions among college students. Hopefully, armed with these selected resources, academic librarians and other academic library staff can help academic community members suffering from selected

mental health conditions common in the college and university population and direct academic community members to the appropriate free internet-based resources for additional information on these selected mental health conditions.

Mini snapshots of free internet resources are not intended to offer medical advice, diagnose, or treat mental health conditions however, the mini snapshots of free selected internet resources on selected mental health conditions are designed to be used in conjunction with free selected mental health resources, e.g. professional organizations such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness or NAMI, to educate colleges and universities about general mental health resources freely available:

- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) offers a variety of mental health resources, including support groups and its website is available at: <https://www.nami.org/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) offers a United States Directory of Mental Health Treatment Facilities and other resources available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2023-nationaldirectory-of-mental-health-treatment-facilities>
- Canadian Psychological Association Societe Canadienne De Psychologie offers publications, resources, and other information on psychology and is available here: <https://cpa.ca/>
- Canadian Psychiatric Association des psychiatres du Canada offers publications, resources, and other information on psychiatry and is available here: <https://www.cpa-apc.org/>
- NPI Lookup Service allows anyone to lookup a NPI number for a mental health provider by state, first, or last name and is a good resource for finding a mental health provider and is accessed here: <https://www.npinumberlookup.org/>
- American Psychological Association offers publications, resources, and other information on psychology and is available here: <https://www.apa.org/>
- American Psychiatric Association offers publications, resources, and other information on psychiatry and is available here: <https://www.psychiatry.org/>
- American Geriatrics Society offers publications, resources, and other information on geriatrics and may be helpful as academic community members work well beyond the traditional retirement age of 65 and emeritus faculty may visit academic libraries. The American Geriatrics Society website is available here: <https://www.americangeriatrics.org/>
- Web Resources: Curated Website Reviews for LIS Professionals and the Public, A book by Gregory Tharp containing selected reviews of mental health websites and is available here: <https://www.elivabooks.com/en/authors/author7255999204>
- Selected condition specific mental health resources are listed below and the general mental health resources list is not all inclusive.

Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)

According to the Kennedy Krieger Institute, Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) is a highly disabling neurological condition caused by dysfunction of the nervous system and an unconscious loop of abnormal responses. Academic librarians and other staff members may encounter FND within the academic community in academic libraries as Finkelstein, et. al. (2025), reports that the prevalence of functional neurological disorder or FND is approximately 50-100,000 people in the UK [2]. A similar prevalence of FND may exist in other countries, although it is unknown due to limited research into FND.

Given that FND strikes across the lifespan, ranging from paediatrics or pediatrics to older adults, it is likely that academic libraries may encounter FND in a variety of populations within the academic community, ranging from faculty to students. As Garris et. al. (2025) notes that educational interventions are needed to address FND, it is important that academic libraries have FND electronic resources available to not only aid the academic libraries' response to library patrons displaying FND symptoms but also to inform the general public, including academic; public; and private providers across many specialities ranging from emergency medicine to psychiatry, about FND [3].

General resources from the Internet explaining what functional neurological disorder (FND) are include:

- NLM Bookshelf FND: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK551567/>
- Stanford Medicine: <https://med.stanford.edu/content/dam/sm/psychiatry/documents/clinical/fnd/FNDClientIntro.pdf>
- APA Psych Net: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2015-25989-016>

Selected FND treatment resources, also part of the academic library's FND collection, from the Internet include:

- Find Hope International, which is a worldwide resource on FND, and is accessed from:
<https://www.fndhope.org.uk/about-fnd-hope/fnd-hope-uk/fnd-treatment-uk/>
- FND Action, which is another FND resource, available at:
<https://www.fndaction.org.uk/treatment/>
- ReACT FND, which offers FND treatment, available at: <https://reactfnd.health/>

Schizophrenia

According to the NIH National Institutes of Mental Health, schizophrenia is a highly disabling psychiatric condition characterized by psychotic symptoms (e.g. hallucinations) and unusual ways of thinking among other varying symptoms. Academic librarians and other staff members may encounter schizophrenia within the academic community in academic libraries as the World Health Organization reports that the prevalence of schizophrenia is approximately 24 million

people occurring during late adolescence and the twenties. Oftentimes, people in their twenties are in college and or university, which makes it likely that academic librarians may see library patrons exhibiting symptoms of schizophrenia.

Therefore, selected educational resources about schizophrenia may be helpful to academic librarians and the general academic community and include:

- Hope for Schizophrenia offers resources and support on schizophrenia and is available here: <https://www.hopeforschizophrenia.com/tools-worksheets/>
- NIH Mental Health Shareables on Schizophrenia seek to educate the public about Schizophrenia and are accessed here: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/get-involved/digitalshareables/shareable-resources-on-schizophrenia>
- Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance (S&PAA) offers educational resources and tools on Schizophrenia and psychosis: <https://sczaction.org/>

Neuropsychiatric Disorders

With a study by Lipson, et. al. (March 2021) reporting that more than half community college and 4year students meeting the criteria for mental health conditions, neuropsychiatric disorders warrant a closer examination [4]. Per Taslim, et. al. (2024), Neuropsychiatric disorders span the spectrum from traumatic brain injuries or what is commonly referred to as TBIs to epilepsy which makes it likely that the average academic librarian will encounter patrons with neuropsychiatric disorders even without realizing it on a daily basis [5]. Therefore, selected educational resources about neuropsychiatric disorders may be helpful and include:

- Psychiatry Online articles on neuropsychiatry available here: <https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/10.1176/appi.neuropsych.21100249>
- Neuropsychiatric Disorders website on Nicklaus Children’s Hospital website offers an overview of various neuropsychiatric disorders and is available here: <https://www.nicklauschildrens.org/conditions/neuropsychiatric-disorders>
- Anderson’s Neuropsychiatric Article which explains the diagnosis and treatment of neuropsychiatric disorders available here: <https://www.jneuropsychiatry.org/peerreview/neuropsychiatric-disorders-diagnosis-treatment--and-research.pdf>

There is a dearth of neuropsychiatric disorders resources geared towards the layperson, e.g. academic community members, as neuropsychiatric disorders are a broad field.

Neurodegenerative Disorders

Neurodegenerative disorders span the spectrum in terms of diseases, e.g. Parkinson’s, and levels of functioning thus making it likely that academic librarians may encounter individuals suffering from neurodegenerative disorders in the academic library and therefore need to be familiar with the resources to direct these individuals to, which include:

- Cleveland Clinic Neurodegenerative Diseases, which provides an overview of various neurodegenerative diseases in layman’s terms and is available here: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/24976-neurodegenerative-diseases>
- Rai et. al.’s “Neurodegenerative Diseases” Book available here: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/24976-neurodegenerative-diseases> [6].
- DePaul University’s OT 433 Course Guide, which covers many neurodegenerative diseases, and is available here: <https://libguides.depaul.edu/c.php?g=1452956&p=10900279>

Psychiatry and Other Disciplines

As a kind of catchall for miscellaneous mental health needs of the academic community, psychiatry is combined with another discipline(s), e.g. ophthalmology. Although somewhat technical in nature, these resources do address academic community mental health needs that combine psychiatry with other disciplines even though these resources are not geared towards the layman:

- Psychiatry & Psychotherapy Podcasts: An assortment of mental health podcasts are available here: <https://www.psychiatrypodcast.com/>
- Mantimi, et. al.’s Psychiatric aspects of ophthalmic disorders: A Narrative Review, provides an overview of how psychiatry and ophthalmology overlap and is available here: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10391518/>
- Deemin et. al.’s Visual Impairment and Mental Health, provides an understanding of how visual conditions overlap with mental health and can be accessed here: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.2147/oph.s258783>
- Rajekar, et. al.’s Psycho Ophthalmology: The Interface between Psychiatry and Ophthalmology provides an overview of how psychiatry and ophthalmology overlap and can be accessed here: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/6b9a/6a4c5b6a51c2d4c3a557266265b9d50359fd.pdf>

Selected condition mental health resources in conjunction with the DMS Library website, available here: <https://www.psychiatryonline.org/doi/book/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787>, are great mental health resources for the academic community.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Given the prevalence of mental health conditions among members of the academic community and since the academic library is often the gathering place for the academic community, ranging from undergraduate students to faculty, it is

best that academic library personnel, ranging from staff to librarians, to be acquainted with mental health resources to direct those in the library community in need of mental health help to the appropriate resources.

General mental health resources, ranging from mental health professional associations to diagnostic manuals, are adjuncts to mental health condition specific snapshots in helping academic community members help themselves to improve and or maintain their mental health. As mental health condition specific snapshots are not common practice and general mental health resources are not uniformly available across all colleges and universities worldwide, it is recommended that colleges and universities post on their academic library website(s) general and condition specific mental health resources as a firstline frontline mental health resource for the entire academic community [7-39].

It is also recommended that future studies on the usage of free mental health resources provided by academic libraries by the academic community address issues such as: safe digital resources or interventions. Does accessing free Internet based mental health resources, e.g. condition specific mental health resources, save lives, improve safe integration of those with mental illnesses into society?

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