

Theme Mental disorders

The care of people with mental disorders is under enormous pressure, leading to unnecessary disease burden, limitations in participation in work and society, and suboptimal use of care. This is particularly relevant for people with severe mental illness, who often relapse and thus make frequent use of the limited care available. The development and rollout of personalized e-health aimed at relapse prevention could relieve the pressure on specialized care and, more importantly, enable people with severe mental illness to take control of their illness (self-management). The effectiveness of e-health depends on identifying and regularly challenging transdiagnostic symptoms that are indicative of relapse for that particular patient. In daily clinical practice, this means that people with severe mental illnesses gain insight into the course of their symptoms and can thus intervene in time (i.e., before a relapse occurs) or can be offered an appropriate intervention via the e-health tool.

In addition, it is important to use this personalized e-health as early as possible in the care process of the patient to prevent the care demand from becoming chronic (i.e., long-term and continuous). To this end, Tilburg University wants to create a distinct profile regarding prevention and intervention from a life-course perspective. In the coming years, we will continue to invest in research on the short- and long-term effects of mood, emotion regulation, and cognition on the development, well-being, and mental health of people in different life stages.

This requires further linking the disciplines of cognitive psychology, clinical psychology, medical psychology, developmental psychology, and health sciences. Interdisciplinary research is required to link, for example, insights of underlying mechanisms of (the prevention of) mental disorders with knowledge of self-management and e-health.

To make the step from insight to impact, collaboration with strategic partners is conditional. To this end, Tilburg University is establishing three academic collaborative centers; each with a focus on a specific societal transition. The Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences is the leader of the Academic Collaborative Center Digital Mental Health. The goal of this Academic Collaborative Center is to create preventive, community-oriented mental health care together with social partners in the region and to embed it directly into clinical practice.

Tilburg University will answer the research questions below.

- What are the factors that contribute most to prevention of mental disorders?
- How do we ensure that more people have access to more effective care through a more personal and low-threshold approach?
- What factors cause mental disorders to be perpetuated?
- Which (personalized) treatments for which mental health problems, and for which target population, are most effective?
- How can we develop better signaling systems to recognize the most prevalent mental illnesses at an early stage (i.e., already in children)?