



KEYNOTE

Stepped-care and e-Health for mental health problems in older adults with vision loss

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Hilde van der Aa is a postdoctoral fellow at the Low Vision Research group of the Ophthalmology department of the VU University Medical Centre and the Amsterdam Public Health Research Institute. From 2003 to 2007 she studied Social Work, after which she worked as a Social Worker for five years. In addition, she completed the Master of Science in Health Education and Promotion. From 2012 to 2016 she performed her PhD research on depression and anxiety in older adults with visual impairment, and completed her second Master of Science in Epidemiology. In June 2016 she received her PhD with honours. Currently, she is performing an RCT on the cost-effectiveness of an e-mental health intervention as part of a stepped-care programme in patients with retinal exudative diseases who receive intra-ocular anti-VEGF injections. In addition, she supervises research assistants and students and is a lecturer in Health Sciences.

Keynote lecture outline

The detrimental impact of vision loss on mental health is well established. However, symptoms are often unrecognised, negative effects are underestimated and cost-effective care is lacking. Stepped-care is a service delivery model in which care is offered in steps according to the failure or lack of effect of lower intensity treatments. Stepped-care is proposed to increase efficiency and meet long-term disease management needs by monitoring progress. In a randomized controlled trial (RCT, follow-up 24 months) in 265 older adults (≥ 50 years) with visual impairment and subthreshold depression and/or anxiety, we found that a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT)-based stepped-care programme on top of usual low vision rehabilitation care was effective in preventing depressive and anxiety

disorders (relative risk 0.63, 95% CI 0.45 to 0.87; hazard ratio 0.57, 95% CI 0.35 to 0.93). Based on these positive results, the programme will be implemented in low vision rehabilitation care in the Netherlands. In addition, we will perform a new RCT on a similar stepped-care programme in patients with retinal exudative diseases who receive intra-ocular anti-VEGF injections, in which an e-mental health intervention (called "E-PsEYE") is incorporated. E-PsEYE is based on the guided self-help course that was offered in the previous RCT. The intervention is expected to be cost-effective, since it is accessible (i.e., patients can use it at home), patient empowerment is stimulated, and relatively little effort from professionals is needed. Patients from five hospitals in the Netherlands will use E-PsEYE at home supported online by social workers from a low vision rehabilitation organisation.