A brief web-based cognitive behavioral therapy (wCBT) program was shown to reduce suicidal ideation among medical interns at two university hospitals. The authors calculated that one case of suicidal ideation could be prevented among every 11 medical interns that participate in the two-hour online program.

Twelve percent of the interns in the intervention group experienced suicidal ideation over the course of an internship year, compared to 21 percent of those in the control group. After adjusting for factors including sex, history of depression, and pre-internship Patient Health Questionnaire–9 scores, interns in the intervention group were 60 percent less likely to experience suicidal ideation over the course of the internship year than their peers. The program was found to be equally effective for men and women. Interns in the intervention group were not more likely to seek mental health treatment than those in the comparison group.

The authors suggested that the web-based format is attractive to interns because it is free, confidential, and can be completed at the user’s convenience. Sixty-two percent of the interns approached by the research team agreed to participate in the research and 88 percent of those in the intervention group completed at least one of the four 30-minute wCBT modules. In contrast, only 10–20 percent of physicians utilize more traditional forms of mental health care during their internships. The authors also suggested that “equipping medical interns early on in their careers with evidence-based strategies to better manage their mental health can potentially have long-lasting effects on their mental health and the health of their patients.”