

## Interactive, Anonymous, Web-based Screening: Implementation, Outcomes, and Data from Year One and Implications for Year Two



Kylie G. Cole Ph.D., Bethany C. Asquith, Touchstone Coordinator,  
Daniela Veliz, Touchstone GA, and Douglas P. Johnson, Ph.D.

## Outline

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Interactive Screening Program
- Evaluation and Data from Year One
- Lessons from Year One and Looking Forward
- Liability Issues and Strategies for Gaining Administrative Support



## Touchstone Project

- Faculty Staff Trainings
  - Touchstone Basics (10-15 minutes)
  - Touchstone Resource (2.5 hours)
- Student Trainings
  - Touchstone Gatekeeper (1.5 hours)
  - Touchstone Social Network (12 hour)
  - Touchstone Peers (ongoing)
- Touchstone Web
  - AFSP's Interactive Screening Program
  - Counseling Center Website

## Touchstone Web: Implementing the Interactive Screening Program

Kylie G. Cole, Ph.D.

## Touchstone Web: Philosophy

- Lowers the barrier for access to services
- Reaches the students who do not come in
- Provides anonymity as a first step in help seeking
- Meets students where they are
  - Phones are old fashioned
  - Electronic communications dominate
  - Web is the resource of choice

## Touchstone Web: Details

- Online ANONYMOUS depression screening
- Rated as:
  - Tier 1 (A & B)– High Risk
  - Tier 2 – Moderate Risk
  - Tier 3 – Low Risk
- Personalized Feedback
  - From Counseling Center clinician
- Interventions offered:
  - Anonymous dialogue with counselor through secure website
  - Face to face counseling session
  - Referral to a campus partner
  - Meeting with a Touchstone Peer
- Invitation or Self Referral

## Touchstone Web: Implementation

- 200 email invitations, 5 times per semester
  - All incoming students
- Two clinicians per mailing
  - First session counselor is same
- Time commitment per clinician
  - 1 hrs/week (reading, responding, reports)
  - 2-3 hrs/week (clinical)

## Counseling Center Web Page

## Screening Tool

Welcome | Sign Up | Questionnaire | Response to Questionnaire

**Stress & Depression Questionnaire**  
Please answer every question to the best of your ability.

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During the last 4 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following?	Not at all	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most or all of the time
Feeling nervous or worrying a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling your life is too stressful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having arguments or fights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling intensely anxious or having anxiety attacks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling intensely lonely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling intensely angry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling hopeless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling desperate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feeling out of control	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Email to Counselor

Web Request for Health Questionnaire Review - Tier 1A: University of Maine

From: assessment@umainetouchstone.org  
 Subject: Web Request for Health Questionnaire Review - Tier 1A  
 To: Project Touchstone  
 Cc: vicki.pruksnowski@percfore.com; screening@tst.org

This request has been sent from www.umainetouchstone.org for review of a questionnaire that was submitted by User: [redacted]

Please select the following link to Review the questionnaire submitted and to provide an Assessment:  
[http://www.umainetouchstone.org/assessment.cfm?c=\[redacted\]](http://www.umainetouchstone.org/assessment.cfm?c=[redacted])

## Questionnaire Excerpt

Welcome | Questionnaire | Response to Questionnaire | Dialogue | Update | Admin

**Stress & Depression Questionnaire**

During the last 4 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following?	Not at all	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most or all of the time
Feeling nervous or worrying a lot			X	X
Becoming easily annoyed or irritable			X	X
Feeling your life is too stressful				X
Having arguments or fights	X			
Feeling intensely anxious or having anxiety attacks		X	X	
Feeling intensely lonely		X	X	
Feeling intensely angry		X		
Feeling hopeless			X	X
Feeling desperate			X	
Feeling out of control			X	

## Clinician's Response

Welcome | Questionnaire | Response to Questionnaire | Dialogue | Update | Admin

Status: Assessment Complete | Last Update: 01/20/2010 12:01 PM

Completed: Tier 1A | Subject ID: 017942101A116995

Client Response to Questionnaire for User ID: [redacted]

Student submitted Response to Questionnaire on 01/20/2010

**Epilepsy Clinic, PhD**  
 Counseling Center and Peer Education Program  
 University of Maine at Orono  
 The Division of Student Affairs  
 University of Maine  
 5731 Orono Health Center  
 Orono, ME 04469  
 Tel: 207.255.1300 (Main number for Counseling Center)

By email to Epilepsy Clinic and I'm a Clinician and Educational Coordinator here at the University of Maine Counseling Center. I have reviewed your responses to the Stress & Depression Screening Questionnaire and am particularly concerned that you have recently been feeling hopeless, anxious, and irritable. You also say in the questionnaire that you often feel concerned about your weight and that those feelings are making your life very difficult.

I believe I can help you, and hope you will visit us until we can set up a time to meet and talk together within the next day or two.

If you would rather talk to me without coming in we can discuss your visit.

### Sample Dialogue

Outcomes Center Home

Note History (Most Recent First):

Originator	Past Date	Notes
Clinician	05/01/2009	Great. See you on Monday, Kyle
██████████	05/01/2009	██████████
Clinician	05/01/2009	Great. I've got you in my schedule for 2 on Monday. We are located in the Cutler Health Bldg and you'll need to enter on the Gannett Hall side of the building. Can I get your name so I can let the front desk know who to expect? See you Monday, Kyle
██████████	04/30/2009	Fine, Monday at two I am available, where do I go?
Clinician	04/30/2009	Okay, sounds like you are pretty busy. I hope you'll be able to take some time to take care of yourself. I like to try to help you and still think it would be a good idea for us to meet when you are available. Are there any times that do work for you tomorrow or Monday. I'll do my best to make myself available to you if you'd be able to come in. Friday at 10 or Monday at 8, 9, 2, 3, 4? Please let me know if you can make this work, Kyle
██████████	04/30/2009	I am afraid that I will be in Southern Maine at three tomorrow, so that would be quite impossible.
Clinician	04/30/2009	I'd really like to see if meeting could help with your feelings of anxiety and thinking about suicide. It sounds like the hopelessness you are feeling is something that keeps you from seeking help because you are not sure what good it could do for you. I think it is really important that you talk to someone about this. Do you think you could agree to one meeting with me before the semester ends and we'll see if we can come up with a plan? I could see you tomorrow at 3, Kyle
██████████	04/30/2009	I'm afraid I really don't have such time for things such as going to meet with you. Besides, the semester is nearly over anyways, what does it really matter?

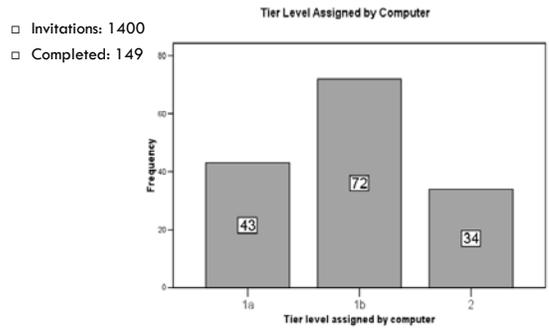
### Try it out!

- AFSP has provided a test site:
- <http://afsp.perficient.com>
- Shows website as students see it
- Visitors can create a User ID and password, view and complete the *Stress & Depression Questionnaire*

### Evaluation and Data from Year One

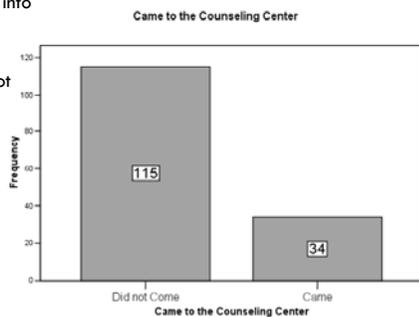
Daniela Veliz, Touchstone Graduate Assistant

### Touchstone Web Data 2009



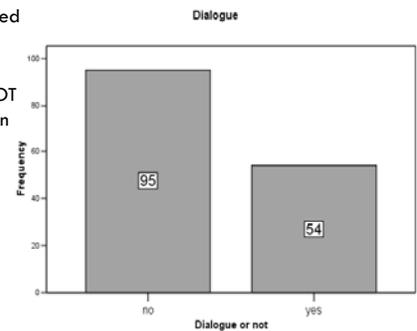
### Touchstone Web Data 2009

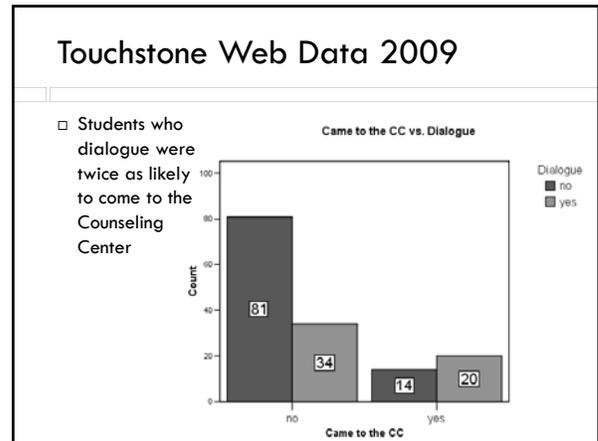
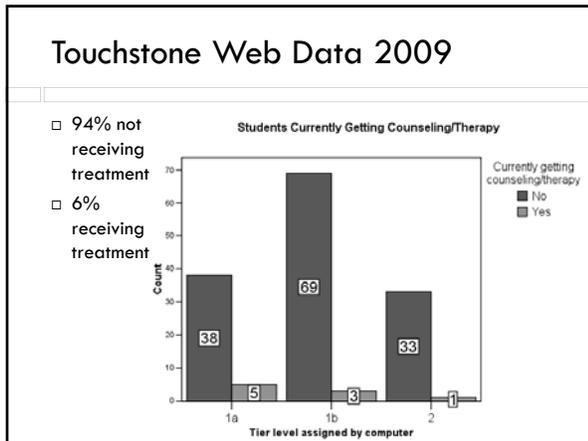
- 23% came into Counseling Center
- 77% did not



### Touchstone Web Data 2009

- 36% engaged in an online dialogue
- 64% did NOT engage in an online dialogue





## LESSONS LEARNED FROM YEAR ONE AND LOOKING AHEAD

Bethany C. Asquith, Touchstone Coordinator

- ### Lessons from Year One
- Timing
  - Clinician Comfort
  - Faculty/Staff Response
  - Dialogues

- ### Timing
- How many to send out?
    - Will I overload my clinical load?
  - When to send them out?
    - Time of year/Day of week
    - What interval of time?
  - What about breaks and holidays?
    - Coverage when clinical services are not offered

- ### Clinician Comfort
- Comfort with the system
    - Knowing the steps and understanding what you can and cannot do
  - Comfort with electronic communication
    - Generational differences?
  - Comfort with non-traditional methods of counseling
    - How to communicate electronically

## Faculty/Staff Response

- Relief
  - Another referral source
  - A place to send students who refuse to go to the Counseling Center

## Dialogues: Challenges

- Students generally are...
  - choosing electronic dialogue over face to face meeting
  - comfortable sharing a LOT of information electronically
  - expecting that someone is "always there" to respond
  - desiring advice and opinions without giving a lot of info
- Tone is difficult to interpret in written format
- Clinician can feel pulled to 'do anything' to keep the student talking

## Dialogues: Techniques

**The goal of a dialogue is to get the student to come in for an intake appointment.**

- Keep it short
- Validate, de-stigmatize, universalize
  - Find out what is keeping them from coming in
  - DON'T question, interpret, and theorize
- Boundaries around response time

## Dialogues: Techniques continued

- Step into the professional role
  - Be specific about dates/times for appointments
  - Use 'professional opinion' to your advantage
- Do not offer unlimited continued dialogue
- Accept their decision to not come in
- Reach out again

## Looking Forward to Year Two

- Target specific groups
  - Athletes
  - GLBT
  - International
  - Veterans
- Accessibility from Counseling Center website
- Training of Faculty/Staff/Students
  - Create cards with link

## LIABILITY ISSUES AND STRATEGIES FOR GAINING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Douglas P. Johnson, Ph.D.

## General Thoughts

- 1100 suicides per year
- Only a tiny percentage suicides involve law suits
- Families are usually very willing to accept mistakes made when trying to give reasonable care
- They don't accept it as easily if the university does not see the problem

## Tort Law

- **Special relationship** creates a duty
- Counselors have a special relationship
  - ▣ Therefore "duty" must be reasonable practice
- States will differ on definitions of "special relationship"
- "Actual knowledge" and "foreseeability" cannot be second hand.

## Tort Law

- Voluntary Assumption of Duty
  - ▣ A student has a problem
  - ▣ The university recognizes the problem
  - ▣ The university offers help to the student
  - ▣ The help offered is poor care and results in the death of the student

## Jain v State of Iowa

- Suicide Plan disclosed to Residence Life Coordinator
- RLC advised:
  - ▣ Go to the Counseling Center for help
  - ▣ Go home for the Thanksgiving Break
  - ▣ Tell Parents
  - ▣ Phone me (RLC) at home if help is needed
- Student did not tell parents and carried out plan after the break
- Nothing the University did increased the risk to the student.

## Stanton v USM

- We had a special relationship and had a duty and had a right to go to court
- She was let to live in the dorm before the semester
- She hadn't been told of the rules
- She lived in the dorm, let a stranger in and was raped
- The case was settled out of court, so the facts were never tested

## Risk and Liability

- The judge decides, based on the law, whether a "special relationship" and "duty" exist
- Facts are relied on to determine whether you breached your duty
  - ▣ Jury or judge decides based on facts

## We Want to Help

- We are aware that
  - ▣ 85% of those who suicide have not sought help
  - ▣ Suicidal students usually don't tell anyone
  - ▣ If they do tell, they tend to tell peers
- We are using ISP to address the problem
- Because we want to help, please don't hold us to creating a "duty"

## ISP "protects" the University

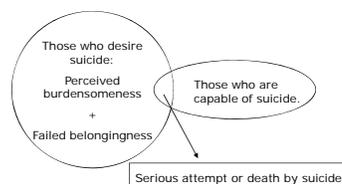
- Anonymity is a protection because we have no special relationship that creates a "duty"
- Decrypting the email would encroach upon creating a "duty"
- Decrypting the email does not provide specific information
- The fact that we are aware of a problem and trying to address the problem is thought to create some degree of "immunity"

## Getting Buy-In for Prevention

- Faculty see suicide prevention as a worthy goal
- Show everyone how they contribute to suicide prevention by promoting a sense of "belonging" and "purpose"
  - ▣ Social Justice v Belonging
- Joiner's theory is approachable, easy to understand and has evident face validity

## Touchstone Project Philosophy

- Thomas Joiner
  - ▣ Why People Die by Suicide (2005)



## Engaging students IS suicide prevention!

- Educational opportunity and success contribute to social justice, belonging and purpose
- Faculty who teach and inspire students promote "protective factors"
- Staff and administrators who take the time to listen, help solve problems
- Importance of all staff: custodians and dining staff
- Peers who care, don't exclude, and who will speak up and engage

## Common Sense Tactics

- Create a Student Behavioral Review Team
- Make Friends (lunches, workouts, attending events)
- Tailor presentations to faculty to their context
- Invite your friends to participate on Advisory Council
- Lean on your friends to get you into meetings
- Frame the project in words that fit the audience
- Make handouts brief and postable
- Hand them out at meetings –don't send them

Questions?

Thank you for participating!

