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Presentation title: Prevention of child sexual abuse on the “Darknet”: a masked, randomized and placebo-controlled trial of internet-delivered CBT for people who use child sexual abuse material

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Online sexual offending is an emerging child protection matter, including the use and spread of child sexual abuse material (CSAM, i.e. “child pornography”) in encrypted chat forums (“Darknet”). Challenges in preventing online child sexual abuse include reaching at-risk individuals for committing child sexual abuse-related crimes, and a lack of evidence-based treatment methods. To prevent sexual abuse, we tried a new active prevention approach reaching out to offenders in Darknet communities and offering anonymous internet-delivered therapy. The intervention Prevent it is a therapist-assisted, eight weeks online cognitive behavioural therapy developed at Karolinska Institutet. The trial had a single-blind (participants), psychological placebo-controlled parallel-group randomized design. We included active adult child sexual abuse material users with sufficient skills in English and no severe psychiatric illness. The primary outcome was the mean change in self-reported CSAM viewing time past week pre-to post-treatment, measured with Sexual Child Molesters Risk Assessment (SChIMRA+). Secondary outcomes included the severity of CSAM consumed, time spent socializing or interacting with children for sexual arousal, time spent on behaviour related to the sexual interest in children, and quality of life. A number of 5504 registered visits to the study webpage resulted in 185 assessment interviews. From April 16, 2019, to Sept 20, 2021, 160 individuals were included and randomized to Prevent it (n=80) or psychological placebo (n=80).