

Introduction: Digital Tools to Support Mental Health

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The digital world holds great power to transform knowledge. Digital health technology is emerging as an important asset globally to address the growing need for mental health and substance use management, and Canadians are supportive of incorporating it as part of the healthcare system (Canada Health Infoway 2023). The World Health Organization recognizes the power of digital health solutions to not only ensure sustainability of the health system but also to enhance access, quality and efficiency (WHO 2024). Countries such as Estonia, Australia, Denmark, Norway and Singapore are leading the way with nationwide, government-coordinated systems. In Canada, clear policies and strategies vary across provinces and territories, but early efforts are underway nationally to build a consolidated foundation required to support digital health. The Canadian Institute for Health Information is developing a Pan-Canadian Health Data Content Framework that will be connected to the Shared Pan-Canadian Interoperability Roadmap through Canada Health Infoway. It will provide standardized ways to integrate and share data across platforms, with health information accessible across all jurisdictions and organizations.

Healthcare Quarterly's (HQ's) ongoing initiative on mental health continues in this issue, featuring content on digital mental health and substance use management originating from within our public healthcare system, developed by front-line practitioners and researchers. HQ is proud to share

contributions from these innovators who have taken their ideas from mere thoughts to tangible impact. Based on Steve Jobs' quote, they are the doers who recognize opportunity and act decisively, rather than waiting for perfect conditions. It is this tenacity of bringing ideas to life that drives meaningful change – and we are excited to share their progress with you. In all cases, the models being applied are to augment and not replace human clinicians because empathy, context and therapeutic connection remain at the heart of effective care.

In the first paper, Hadjistavropoulos and Peynenburg (2025) detail an internet-delivered cognitive behaviour therapy service that has been successfully operating in Saskatchewan for more than 15 years. Lustig et al. (2025) discuss their novel work using machine learning to improve outcomes by developing a model to predict an individual's risk of readmission after discharge from psychiatric hospitalization. In the third paper, Gratzer et al. (2025) describe a nurse practitioner-led virtual urgent mental health service that has been valuable in helping patients to avoid emergency room visits.

While the digital world is moving fast and has tremendous potential to transform knowledge, it can also perpetuate significant power imbalances and expose blind spots in our understanding of the human experience, particularly in the context of mental health. Scientific and technological advancements are public goods, and governments have a responsibility to oversee their development and application. Let us expect that

the covetously guarded principle of jurisdictional autonomy will not hold back achievements that would benefit all Canadians. Coordinated policies and infrastructure, guided by

clear national strategies, are essential for effectively integrating technologies into the healthcare system and supporting the dedicated front-line go-getters driving societal progress. **HQ**

References

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About the Author

Ruby Brown, BScN, MBA, ICD.D, has served in executive roles across multiple provinces and territories. She has spearheaded projects from laying the groundwork for healthcare organizations to navigating complex negotiations between governments and driving innovative advancements in mental health. As a principal of Mandala Management Inc., she offers strategic insights and operational guidance to enhance organizational effectiveness and contributes to government-initiated assessments of healthcare systems. Ruby can be reached by e-mail at ruby@mandalaconsulting.ca.