

Healing Hearts of SW Oklahoma

December 2019

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Harnessing the Power of Technology for Mental Health



The World Economic Forum (WEF) Technology for Mental Health Council discusses approaches for harnessing technology for mental health.

by **Joshua Gordon (NIMH)** November 20, 2019

“Imagine if we had such easy technological solutions to help guide our forays into mental health. How might devices and software help with mental health screening, diagnosis, and prevention? How might they connect individuals who have mental illnesses to providers or enhance access to care in remote and under-resourced settings? How might these technologies enable the use of relevant data for research and quality improvement?”

The idea that technology can be harnessed for mental health is not a new one. There are thousands of apps aimed at maintaining or improving mental health. Some facilitate connections to mental health professionals; others provide stand-alone treatment approaches or help individuals record their symptoms and monitor their progress. Newer tech approaches are also proving incredibly useful for research purposes. For example,

NIMH-funded research groups and startup companies are examining the potential of using a combination of activity monitors, digital keyboards, and phone usage in addition to in-the-moment surveys to detect the onset of depression or mania more quickly.”

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RECENT NEWS

Link between inflammation and mental sluggishness shown in new study



Scientists have uncovered a possible explanation for the mental sluggishness that often accompanies illness.

by **University of Birmingham** November 15, 2019

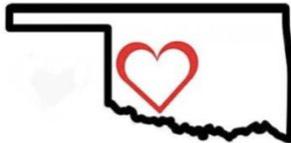
A team in the University's Centre for Human Brain Health investigated the link between this mental fog and inflammation -- the body's response to illness. In a study published in *Neuroimage*, they show that inflammation appears to have a particular negative impact on the brain's readiness to reach and maintain an alert state.

The study focussed specifically on an area of the brain which is responsible for visual attention. A group of 20 young male volunteers took part and received a salmonella typhoid vaccine that causes temporary inflammation but has few other side effects. They were tested for cognitive responses to simple images on a computer screen a few hours after the injection so that their ability to control attention could be measured. Brain activity was measured while they performed the attention tests.

The results showed that inflammation specifically affected brain activity related to staying alert, while the other attention processes appeared unaffected by inflammation.”

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