

APS COVID-19 Collaboration Offers Recommendations to White House on Community Mental Health

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Experts from the APS Global Collaboration on COVID-19 have responded to a call for input on digital health from the White House, suggesting that community mental health could be improved by the development and implementation of evidence-based psychological treatments offered through technology such as smartphone apps and text messaging.

Earlier this year, the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy issued a request for external input on how digital health technologies could be used to transform health, wellness, and health equity. Mental health experts from the APS Global Collaboration on COVID-19—an effort mobilizing psychological scientists to make recommendations on how behavioral science can address the current pandemic and help prepare for future ones—developed a series of recommendations focused on how evidence-based psychological treatments are an effective tool for digital mental health interventions.

This response, submitted to the White House on March 17, 2022, was developed with leadership by COVID-19 collaboration Working Group on Mental Health and COVID-19 head Allison Harvey (University of California, Berkeley) and working group members Martin Antony (Ryerson University) and Derek Novacek (University of California, Los Angeles). The response observes the growing mental health crises, partly produced by the pandemic, but notes that evidence-based psychological treatments, or EBPTs—short-term, rigorously tested mental health interventions—can be delivered via digital health technology. The response notes that EBPTs’ ability to be delivered potentially over wearable or

smartphone technology, through telehealth, or over text messaging can surmount existing challenges in accessing EBPTs.

“Effective EBPTs are available for most mental health problems, including depression, all forms of anxiety, trauma, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, sleep problems, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder,” observes the response.

As an illustration of the successful deployment of EBPTs to those in need, APS’s response observes recent activities in the United Kingdom focused on improving access to mental health therapies that are now serving as a model for other countries.

“We have entered the third year of the pandemic and there is a serious mental health crisis. An exciting role, at this point in history, is for psychological scientists to work out how to get out of our echo chamber and effectively communicate our science to policy makers,” Harvey told APS.

“This is an exciting direction that promises to help bridge the gap between science and real world practice and with potential to truly move the needle on alleviating the burden of mental illness well beyond our laboratories.”

[To read APS’s response to the White House request for information, click here.](#)

Interested in the intersections of mental health and COVID-19? [Watch a recording of a recent webinar organized by the Mental Health and COVID-19 working group titled “Mental Health in a Global Pandemic: Lessons Learned From Psychological Science” by clicking here.](#)