SBRI Healthcare targets mental health in latest funding round

£700K awarded to develop new interventions and transformative technologies that support positive mental health

18th July 2018: SBRI Healthcare, the NHS England funded initiative championed by the AHSN Network, today announced the programme's latest round of funding is supporting companies to develop novel solutions to tackle the challenges of mental illness. Mental health problems account for a quarter of all ill health in the UK with mental illness being the single largest cause of disability. One in four of us will experience mental health problems each year at an estimated economic and social annual cost of £105 billion[1].

Sharing in £700K investment, the seven successful companies have all demonstrated the potential of their innovations to help alleviate the current pressures on mental health services and support positive mental health. Areas of particular focus were 'Children and Young People's Mental Health', 'Depression, Self-harm and Suicide' and 'New Models of Care'.

Among the winning technologies:

- an immersive gaming technology to improve access to, and effectiveness of, current frontline treatments of children's anxiety, using gamification to increase therapy adherence.

- a voice-operated 'conversational' smartphone app designed to deliver a purpose-built cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) programme to treat anxiety in adolescents.

- a software platform that can automatically create and deliver personalised virtual reality (VR) content to address mental health issues that lead to depression, self-harm and suicide.

- a digital support programme using innovative methods for enhancing the role of the young peer supporter through a multi-media training portal and online supervision chat room to reduce use of specialist services and help address the stigma associated with mental health.

Each project has received funding in the range of £84,000 to £100,000 and will aim to demonstrate technical feasibility over a six-month development phase.

Professor Chris Hollis, Chair of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Director, NIHR MindTech MedTech Co-operative commented: "A significant proportion of mental health problems in adults start early in life and therefore interventions in childhood are essential to avert the development of long-term problems. Furthermore, only about one quarter of children and young people with mental health problems currently receive any treatment. The successful companies who presented to the review board could really benefit children and young adults with innovations that have potential to increase access, provide more efficient and flexible services and improve outcomes."

Stuart Monk, Director of Delivery at South West AHSN added: "Positive awareness for mental health is on the rise and more people are accessing specialist mental health services. Whilst progress is being made to reduce waiting times it is important we encourage new ideas that can benefit patients seeking help. The AHSN Network is looking forward to working with the winners of this latest SBRI Healthcare competition to support them in making a real impact."

The companies (and supporting Academic Health Science Network) are: BfB Labs (Imperial College Health Partners); Cadscan Ltd (North West Coast AHSN); emteq Ltd (Surrey & Sussex AHSN); Mayden House Ltd (West of England AHSN); Sentireal Ltd (Northern Ireland); UDAMO Ltd (Kent, Surrey & Sussex AHSN); XenZone Ltd (Greater Manchester AHSN).

For more information on SBRI Healthcare visit www.sbrihealthcare.co.uk

1: The Five Year Forward View For Mental Health, Feb 2016. https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf

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BfB Labs www.bfb-labs.com
Local AHSN – Imperial College

Immersive gaming to better treat anxiety in young people

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a well-evidenced approach recommended for treating anxiety in children, but it is expensive to deliver, and patients often face long waiting times for treatments. BfB Labs is developing new immersive gaming technology to improve access to, and effectiveness of, current frontline treatments of children's anxiety, using gamification to increase adherence to therapeutic protocols. The innovation combines the latest understanding of anxiety management in young people with what BfB Labs has learned about creating engaging and immersive games to develop a new anxiety management product - fun to use, with high adherence, and an evidence base to support use alongside therapy.

Cadscan Ltd http://cad-scan.co.uk/
Local AHSN: North West Coast (Innovation Agency)

PhoBot - A voice-controlled conversational agent to reduce anxiety in children

Children and young people with mental illness wait an average of ten years before receiving help. Rates of depression and anxiety amongst young people have increased by 70% in the last 25 years. Anxiety disorders are common and are associated with suicidal behaviours, drug and alcohol misuse and poor educational attainment. PhoBot is a voice-operated conversational agent designed to deliver a purpose-built CBT programme to treat anxiety in adolescents. It is built around a natural, low-friction interface to facilitate engagement and efficacy and delivered via smartphone using a low-cost pricing model.

emteq Limited www.emteq.net
Local AHSN: Kent, Surrey & Sussex

STrIVE: **S**ocial **Tr**aining **i**n **V**irtual **E**nvironments with augmented reality

Measuring facial expressions (FE) and emotions has the potential to revolutionise the management of healthcare issues. Changes in FE or emotional responses are features of depression, bipolar disorder, and social anxiety. Detecting FE with cameras does not allow ambulatory monitoring. For this feasibility project, emteq will develop a glasses-based emotion and behavioural monitoring platform and evaluate it with patients with major depression. MOODspecs will enable accurate measurement of emotional FEs, voice analysis, physical activity monitoring and heart rate variability. This will enable earlier identification of treatment responses, stratification of patients into clinical sub-types and earlier intervention in non-responders.

Mayden House Ltd www.mayden.co.uk
Local AHSN: West of England

Improving outcomes through automated, standardised assessments and machine learning

By comparing the profile of a new patient entering a service with the wealth of historical patient data available, Mayden House will employ machine learning techniques to recommend appropriate treatments - including direct and instant access to digital therapies - with a view to significantly improving both waiting times and outcomes for patients, and lowering costs. This will be achieved by standardising and automating the assessment process at the point of referral and using the data collected nationally to signpost available treatment options that typically result in positive outcomes for patients with similar profiles.

Sentireal Ltd www.sentireal.com
Northern Ireland

Tackling depression, self-harm and suicide via automated, personalised virtual reality

Virtual reality (VR) is emerging as an effective medium for treating a variety of mental health conditions. However the content shown in VR tends to be pre-authored and one-size-fits-all, therefore lacking the personalised and tailored qualities that are necessary for effective recovery and maintenance of mental health. This project will create a software platform that can automatically create and deliver personalised virtual reality content to address mental health issues that lead to depression, self-harm and suicide. The patient's actions and attitudes inside VR are automatically analysed and may be referred back to clinicians for diagnostic and treatment adjustment purposes.

UDAMO Limited
Local AHSN: Kent, Surrey & Sussex

Project udamo: pocket therapy

A novel automation of Cognitive Restructuring (CR) that has potential to revolutionise mobile-delivered Cognitive Therapy. The automation of CR will allow patients to receive therapeutic content that adapts to their life circumstances without the involvement of a human therapist.

XenZone Limited www.xenzone.com
Local AHSN: Greater Manchester

Accelerating to wellness through a digital peer support programme

XenZone's aim is to engage young people in peer supporting roles, through digital training, moderation and supervision. Peer support is a successful method of accelerating a therapeutic process and therefore, the journey to wellness, as well as sustaining that wellness. Utilising XenZone's existing online portal, the company is creating innovative methods for enhancing the role of the young peer supporter through a multi-media training portal and online supervision chat room. Outcomes measures will range from economic evaluation focusing on reduction of specialist service use, to the positive impact on peer supporter and wider community including stigma reduction.

About SBRI Healthcare www.sbrihealthcare.co.uk

SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative) Healthcare is an NHS England funded programme that provides funding and support to innovative companies to solve healthcare problems. The SBRI Healthcare team works closely with clinicians and frontline NHS staff to identify key challenges from within the service, focusing on specific areas recognised as priority by NHS England and the 15 Academic Health Science Networks (AHSN). The programme aims to improve patient care, increase efficiency in the NHS, and support the UK economy by helping smaller companies grow. Each contract is 100% funded by SBRI Healthcare and while the public sector has the right to license the resultant technology in certain circumstances, its intellectual property remains with the company.

The programme's network of innovative companies extends throughout the UK. Since launching in 2009, £75 million has been awarded to over 150 companies developing solutions for major NHS challenges such as cancer detection, dementia care, mental health in young people and

self-management of long-term conditions. SBRI Healthcare supported companies are already making an impact.

About AHSN Network http://www.ahsnnetwork.com

There are 15 Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs) across England, established by NHS England in 2013 to spread innovation at pace and scale – improving health and generating economic growth.

Each AHSN works across a distinct geography serving a different population in each region. As the only bodies that connect NHS and academic organisations, local authorities, the third sector and industry, AHSNs are catalysts that create the right conditions to facilitate change across whole health and social care economies, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for patients.