Integrating e-Mental Health into Practice

Summarized from Mental Health Commission of Canada: Toolkit for e-Mental Health Implementation

What is e-Mental Health?

E-Mental Health refers to the use of the internet and other electronic communication technologies to deliver mental health information and care. E-Mental Health services are an effective and complimentary option to traditional face-to-face mental health support, and can include:

- Instant messaging and video-based counselling services (e.g. telehealth, telepsychiatry)
- Consumer information portals
- Online support groups, communities, forums and social networks
- Web-based self-management interventions
- Personalized monitoring/supports
- Mobile phone applications
- Online assessment or diagnostic tools
- Blogs and podcasts
- Therapeutic gaming programs, robotic simulation and virtual reality systems

Benefits

For practitioners

- Where appropriate, patients can be treated effectively with less in-person clinical time, freeing up resources and reducing waitlists
- Can offer health services in concert with patient needs and preferences
- Can fill service gaps and help address concerns due to stigma and other reasons

For patients

- Can access at low or no cost
- Can resolve access issues in rural, remote and low socioeconomic areas
- Can be an introduction to therapy for individuals experiencing mental health issues for the first time or who have never sought professional help
- Can provide convenient service options for patients– empowering them to decide where and when treatment will take place

Engaging Patients in e-Mental Health

Inform: Attract patients to e-Mental Health tools via online information and other media

Engage: Providing or recommending an E-Mental Health tool to a patient for a specific purpose

Empower: Helping patients create efficiencies in their self-management and supporting patients to track and share their progress

Partner: Creating synergies so multiple practitioners or multiple care environments can communicate via e-Health tools

Support: Promoting a practice environment where the client defines their e-Health community

Approaches to e-Mental Health Integration

	Approach	Practitioner Role
1	**Promotion:** Providing information about self-help resources	Guide patient toward high-quality resources
2	**Case management:** After initial assessment, making a referral or recommendation to specific intervention or resource	Not expected to assist patient in working through tool, but provide additional assessment, support and referrals if patient does not improve
3	**Coaching:** Actively supporting the patient to complete e-Mental Health intervention and overcome barriers	e-Mental Health intervention is primary intervention providing content and structure for treatment and practitioner supports self-therapeutic activities and helps patient engage with the program
4	**Symptom focused:** Extending/ enhancing discrete face-to-face therapy around specific symptoms	Develop individualized assessment, formulation, and intervention plan incorporating traditional therapeutic activities as well as e-Mental Health interventions
5	**Comprehensive:** Fully integrating e-Mental Health resources and tools into care	Include both traditional therapeutic activities and e-Mental Health interventions and activities if multiple therapeutic approaches are required or where first line interventions have been unsuccessful

Practice, Policy and Privacy Considerations

As clinical practices and existing policies and guidelines around the use of e-Mental Health tools and services differ across organizations, it is important to understand and adhere to your practice's specific provider considerations. Here are some general reminders for digital communication:

- Competency and skill development in using software is key to ensuring the usability and acceptability of e-Mental Health tools for patients

- Digital communication skills are learned best through application, feedback and practice

- Stay informed on the risks associated with each form of digital communication

- Stay informed on legislation around health information that must be protected, practices to be followed by those accessing, collecting, or disclosing personal health information, and individuals' rights to access their personal health information