

# The Digital Dog

Improving mental health through technology



Statistics show that less than half of all Australians experiencing the symptoms of mental illness will access formal treatment.

It is clear that traditional delivery of mental health services is not providing the breadth of support required. We need to be able to provide evidence-based, accessible and targeted mental health programs to millions of people across a huge geographical area.

## Taking mental health ONLINE

There are many reasons why people don't access traditional mental health services. These include stigma or shame, financial limitations, geographical isolation, time-poor lifestyles or a simple lack of available clinical resources.

Over the last decade, eMental Health services have grown to fill gaps and complement traditional treatment with mobile interactive websites, apps, online crisis counselling, use of sensor-based monitoring devices and psychiatry via skype.

Online and mobile phone based tools can be used to assess risk factors in real time whilst delivering a tailored program to different populations across the country or even the world.

Digital technology also provides a unique opportunity to connect through social media, SMS, email, blogs or Bluetooth. This means we can share messages to the individual or the world, whilst changing and measuring attitudes and influencing behaviour on a mass scale.

## WHAT IS the Digital Dog?

Digital Dog is a research group within the Black Dog Institute that focusses entirely on the use of technology to solve mental health problems.

Start-up funding was granted by the National Health and Medical Research Council through the prestigious John Cade Fellowship awarded to Professor Helen Christensen.

The five priorities of the Digital Dog are:

- 1) Developing web and mobile phone interventions to help lower depression, lower risk of suicide and promote mental wellbeing.**
- 2) Establishing social media as a valid indicator of mental health risk**
- 3) Using the interconnectivity and sensors on mobile phones to monitor and measure mental health**
- 4) Utilising technology to deliver mental health prevention programs in schools**
- 5) Producing public documents and being a source of expertise to promote the benefits of online mental health services for the community.**



**Advances in information technology have brought us to an exciting era for mental health.**

**Increasing awareness and use of online mental health services will lead to more Australians seeking, and receiving, the help they need.**



Professor  
Helen Christensen,  
Director,  
Black Dog Institute

## CURRENT projects

### STAYING CONNECTED

Using mobile sensor technology to reduce social isolation among young people.

### THE TRIPOD PROJECT

Investigates the effectiveness of a universal prevention intervention for major depression disorder in adolescence prior to a major stressor.

### THE GROUND TRUTH

Profiling users' mental health by harnessing novel machine learning based analyses of social media conversations.

### CLASSIFYING CONCERNING TWEETS

Determining whether suicide-related Twitter posts can be classified as 'strongly concerning' based solely on the content of the post.

### WE FEEL

Explores whether Twitter can provide an accurate, real-time signal of the world's emotional state.

### MYCOMPASS

An online, interactive self-help program for people experiencing mild-to-moderate symptoms of stress, anxiety and/or depression.

### HEALTHY THINKING TRIAL

Aims to test the effectiveness of a web-based self-help program for people with suicidal thoughts.

### iBOBBLY

World's first suicide prevention app designed especially for use by Indigenous youth.

### BITE BACK

Online program for young Australians aged 12 to 18 – helping them to amplify the good things in life.

### SPARK

A positive psychology mobile app designed to build resilience, increase well-being and deepen social connections.

### SNAPSHOT

A free mobile phone app that helps you to keep track of your mental wellbeing.

### GEOSPATIAL MAPPING OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

A project that aims to map major indices of suicide with risk factor and health services.

## The BENEFITS of using digital technology

- **Effective**
- **Accessible**
- **Scalable**
- **Private**
- **Immediate**
- **Personalised**
- **Inexpensive**



## CONTACT details

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