



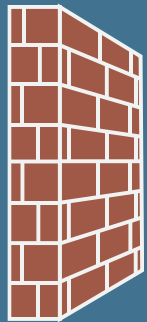
# Ask a Digital Navigator: Adopting Technology to Improve Mental Health

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Pharmaceutical Development &  
Commercialization, Inc. (OPDC)

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Commercialization, Inc.

# Objectives

Challenges of implementing digital mental health tools into clinical practice



Define the role of the digital navigator



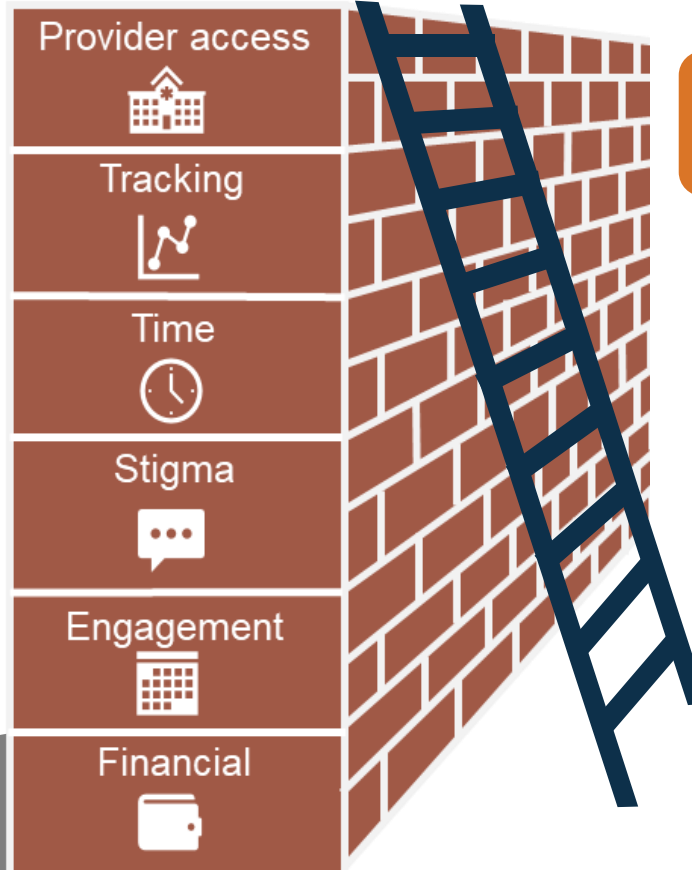
Role of digital navigators in the implementation of technology into health care



# Challenges of Implementing Digital Mental Health Tools Into Clinical Practice

# Access to Adequate Mental Health Treatment Is Insufficient<sup>1,2</sup>; Digital Tools May Help

Patients experience many barriers to accessing mental health care<sup>3-10</sup>



Digital tools may improve access to mental health care<sup>4,8,11-17</sup>



1. National Institute of Mental Health. Mental Illness. Jan 2022. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/mental-illness>. Accessed May 27, 2022.

2. National Institute of Mental Health. Major Depression. Jan 2022. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/major-depression>. Accessed May 27, 2022.

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4. Mongelli F et al. *Focus (Am Psychiatr Publ)*. 2020;18(1):16-24.

5. Andrilla CHA et al. *Am J Prev Med*. 2018;54(6 Suppl 3):S199-S207.

6. Khalifeh AH et al. *J Psychosoc Nurs Ment Health Serv*. 2021;59(1):39-51.

7. Arnaez JM et al. *J Ment Health*. 2020;29(2):182-190.

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9. Saxon V et al. *J Ment Health Clin Psychol*. 2018;2(3):23-26.

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12. Larrison CR et al. *J Behav Health Serv Res*. 2018;45(1):133-142.

13. Torous J et al. *J Technol Behav Sci*. 2019;4:73-85.

14. Patel NA and Butte AJ. *NPJ Digit Med*. 2020;3:159.

15. Dang A et al. *J Fam Med Prim Care*. 2020;9:2207-2213.

16. Friis-Healy et al. *JMIR Ment Health*. 2021;8(1):e25456.

17. Powell AC et al. *BJPsych Open*. 2020;6(2):e16.

# Digital Tools Available in the US

**Health and wellness apps**  
promote general well-being  
and healthy living



*Examples:*

- Meditation app
- Relaxing sleep sounds
- Medication reminder app

**Patient monitoring  
and assessment tools**  
can be used to monitor  
specific health data



*Examples:*

- Mood diary
- Sleep cycle tracker
- Digital sensor that sends data to an app

**Digital therapeutics**  
deliver software-based  
interventions to treat,  
manage, or prevent a  
disease or condition



*Examples:*

- Psychotherapy app
- AI virtual therapist
- Game-based treatment for ADHD

ADHD, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder;; AI, artificial intelligence; US, United States.

Digital Therapeutics Alliance. November 2019. Accessed June 20, 2023. [https://dtxalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/DTA\\_Digital-Industry-Categorization\\_Nov19.pdf](https://dtxalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/DTA_Digital-Industry-Categorization_Nov19.pdf).

# How Can Digital Tools Enhance Mental Health Care?

## Patient Perspective

- Provide education and information on condition and care plans<sup>1,2</sup>
- Reinforce behavioral changes<sup>1,3</sup>
- Aid in self-monitoring<sup>1</sup>
- Increase access to care (24/7 access)<sup>1,3,4</sup>



## HCP Perspective

- Increase clinical efficiency<sup>5</sup>
- Strengthen the HCP-patient relationship<sup>4</sup>
- Improve clinical outcomes such as<sup>5,6</sup>:
  - Symptomology and functioning<sup>5,6</sup>
  - Decreasing patient hospitalizations<sup>6</sup>
- Provide remote care<sup>5,6</sup>
  - Send and receive health care data, monitor patient status, provide evidence-based care

DTx, digital therapeutics; HCP, health care provider.

1. Birnbaum F et al. Acad Emerg Med. 2025;22(6):754–756.
2. Polillo A et al. JMIR Ment Health. 2021;8(5):e24567 doi: 10.2196/24567.
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5. Henry TA. AMA. 5 insights into how physicians view, use digital health tools. October 2022. <https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/digital/5-insights-how-physicians-view-use-digital-health-tools>. Accessed May 26, 2023.
6. Hatch A et al. JMIR Ment Health. 2018;5(2):e46 doi: 10.2196/mental.9777.

# Factors That Can Challenge Integration of Digital Tools



## Feasibility considerations<sup>1-4</sup>

- **Eg, Do patients have access to devices and wireless internet?**<sup>2</sup>



## Cultural considerations<sup>4-7</sup>

- **Eg, Is the tool culturally appropriate and available in languages other than English?**<sup>5,6</sup>



## Potential risks of digital tool usage<sup>4,8-10</sup>

- **Eg, How can you ensure patient adherence?**<sup>8</sup>

1. Stubbe DE. *Focus (Am Psychiatr Publ)*. 2020;18(4):424–427.

2. Connolly SL et al. *Curr Psychiatry Rep*. 2021;23(7):38.

3. Emerson MR et al. *Transl Behav Med*. 2023;13(8):612–623.

4. Mishkind M. Apps & eHealth Programs for Mood Disorders. National Network of Depression Centers 12th Annual Conference. Advances In Psychiatry: COVID-19 And Beyond. Virtual Meeting. October 2, 2020. <https://nndc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Matt-Mishkind-2020-NNDC-Conference.pdf>. Accessed August 22, 2022.

5. Muñoz AO et al. *Front Digit Health*. 2021;3:615366.

6. Whitehead L et al. *J Med Internet Res*. 2023;25:e47219

7. Valdez RS et al. *J Am Med Inform Assoc*. 2021;28(2):389–392.

8. Coravos A et al. *Digit Biomark*. 2019;3:31–71.

9. Gordon WJ et al. *npj Digital Medicine*. 2020;3:14.

10. Patel S et al. *J Med Internet Res*. 2020;22:e16228.



# Define the Role of the Digital Navigator

# Implementing Digital Health Tools: A Role for Digital Navigators?

- Human support for technology is an unmet need that **can help bridge the gap** between individuals and HCPs, support technology users, and improve clinical outcomes<sup>1,2</sup>



- A **digital navigator** is a newly proposed role within the care team, who aims to<sup>3</sup>:
  - Help select evidence-based apps
  - Create clinically meaningful summaries of patient app data
  - Troubleshoot technology issues for patients

HCP, health care provider.

1. Ben-Zeev D. *Psychiatr Serv.* 2017;68:107–108.
2. Dopke CA et al. *JMIR Form Res.* 2021;5:e25810.
3. Connolly SL et al. *Curr Psychiatry Rep.* 2021;7:23(7):38.

# Why Are Digital Navigators Needed?

Digital navigators help fill a key role in making sure patients and HCPs can use digital tools in mental health care by:

Providing **technical support** for patients and HCPs

- Augment care without impeding clinical workflow<sup>1</sup>



Supporting **sustained use** of digital tools in clinical settings<sup>1</sup>

- Assisting HCPs with evaluating and choosing appropriate apps<sup>2</sup>
- Helping patients set up and engage with the app and encouraging continued use<sup>1,3</sup>

**Facilitating communication** related to digital tool use between patients and HCPs, supporting and strengthening the therapeutic alliance<sup>1,2,4</sup>



HCP, health care provider.

1. Connolly SL et al. *Curr Psychiatry Rep.* 2021;23:38.
2. LaMonica HM et al. *JMIR Aging.* 2021;4(1):e21461.

3. Green JB et al. *JMIR Form Res.* 2023;7:e46491.
4. Rauseo-Ricupero N. *Int Rev Psychiatry.* 2021;33(3):1-10.

# Becoming a Digital Navigator

- **Anyone** trained to support digital health in a clinical context can be a digital navigator, including<sup>1-3</sup>:
  - **Clinicians, medical assistants, nurse case managers, office staff, entry-level health care team members, peers, and volunteers**<sup>3-5</sup>
- Background and training may depend on **individual needs** of the clinic<sup>2</sup>
- **Training** for a digital navigator may involve:
  - Supporting different smartphone operating systems<sup>6,7</sup>
  - Evaluating apps<sup>4,8</sup>
  - Clinical safety<sup>2,6</sup>
  - Data evaluation<sup>4,8</sup>
  - Facilitating digital engagement<sup>7</sup>
- One group has developed a 10-hour **training and certification process**<sup>3,4</sup>



1. Emerson MR et al. *Transl Behav Med.* 2023;13(8):612–623.

2. Wisiewski H and Torous J. *Acta Psychiatr Scand.* 2020;141(4):350–355.

3. Wisiewski H et al. *Digit Biomark.* 2020;4(suppl 1):119–135.

4. Connolly SL et al. *Curr Psychiatry Rep.* 2021;23:38.

5. Myrick K and del Vecchio P. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal.* 2016;39(3):197–203.

6. Macrynika N et al. *NEJM Catal Innov Care Deliv.* 2023;4(9).

7. Green JB et al. *JMIR Form Res.* 2023;7:e46491.

8. LaMonica HM et al. *JMIR Aging.* 2021;4(1):e21461.

# Role of Digital Navigators in the Implementation of Technology Into Health Care

# What Is the Process for Adding a Digital Navigator to a Clinic or Health System?

## What educational background will digital navigators need to fulfill their responsibilities?

Digital navigators can perform various roles, including providing therapy or improving access to care; these roles may need different types of education



## Who will provide training and support to digital navigators?

Depending on the needs of the organization, training and support may come from within the organization or be adapted from outside resources



## How will digital navigators communicate with patients?

As digital literacy and access to technology will vary for different patients, different methods of communication may be preferred in different situations. Types of communication can be remote (video and telephone calls or text messaging) or in-person and should fit the needs of the patient population being served



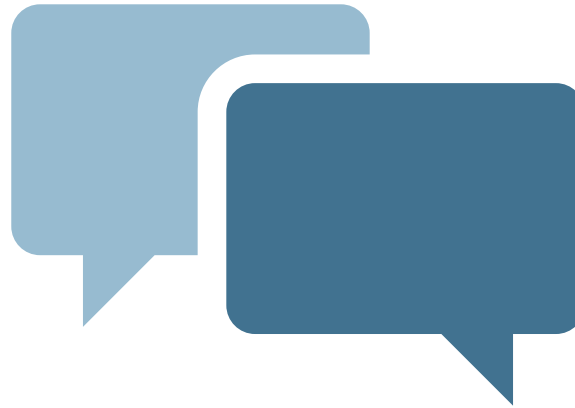
## What aspects of patient care will digital navigators support?

It is important to consider where digital navigators fit into the daily workflow and how many responsibilities they will take on. Examples of responsibilities include helping patients access and use technology, encouraging patient engagement with technology, and offering health and lifestyle recommendations to patients based on data collected with apps or other technology

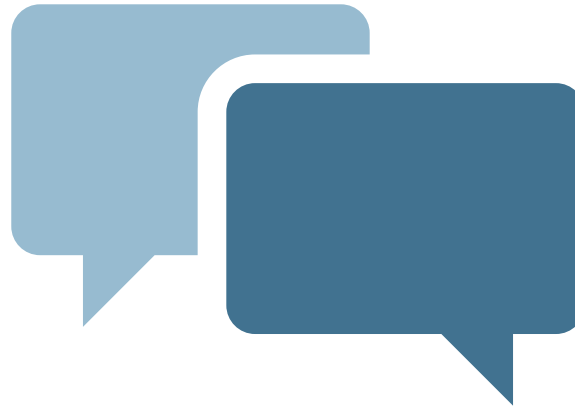


Perret et al. *Lancet Digit Health*. 2023;5:e925–32

# Who Funds the Digital Navigator Position?



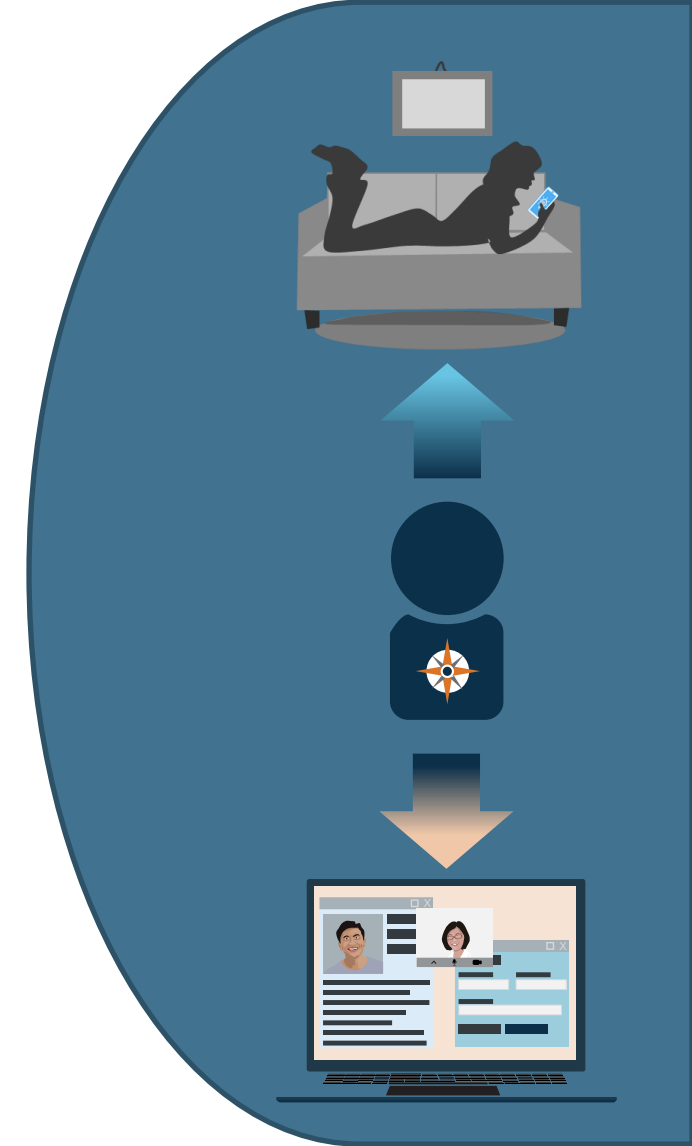
# Can You Share Successes in Integrating Digital Navigators in Clinical Practice?





# Summary

- Digital tools may help **address unmet needs** in accessing mental health treatment<sup>1</sup>
- Digital navigators help fill a key role in making sure patients and HCPs can use digital tools in mental health care by:
  - Providing **technical support** for patients and HCPs<sup>2</sup>
  - Supporting **sustained use of digital tools** in clinical settings<sup>2-4</sup>
  - **Facilitating communication** related to digital tool use between patients and HCPs, supporting and strengthening the **therapeutic alliance**<sup>2,3,5</sup>
- Anyone trained to support digital health in a clinical context can be a digital navigator<sup>2,3,6-8</sup>
  - Digital navigator training can provide a critical skillset for those currently within, as well as those interested in joining, the health care profession<sup>9</sup>



HCP, health care provider.

1. Dang A et al. *J Fam Med Prim Care*. 2020;9:2207–2213.
2. Connolly SL et al. *Curr Psychiatry Rep*. 2021;23:38.
3. LaMonica HM et al. *JMIR Aging*. 2021;4(1):e21461.
4. Green JB et al. *JMIR Form Res*. 2023;7:e46491.
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6. Emerson MR et al. *Transl Behav Med*. 2023;13(8):612–623.
7. Wisiewski H and Torous J. *Acta Psychiatr Scand*. 2020;141(4):350–355.
8. Wisiewski H et al. *Digit Biomark*. 2020;4(suppl 1):119–135.
9. Macrynika N et al. *NEJM Catal Innov Care Deliv*. 2023;4(9).

# Closing

# Digital Role-play Coming Soon!

Welcome to a virtual role-play created for you to practice your communication skills

This interactive experience is your opportunity to interact with fictional representations of the people you speak with. You'll choose your scenario and have a discussion with a patient, a parent or a multi-disciplinary team member. The goal of the conversation will be to accomplish the specific aim of the role-play you select.

Watch the video to see how it works

Play video ▶

Skip tutorial →

For more information please visit: <https://vlt.psychu.org/>

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