



## Welcome

to the eMEN winter newsletter, updating you on our progress and achievements in e-mental health technologies across Europe.

## What has happened so far?

### **Piloting new products:**

As part of the eMEN project, each partner country is piloting an e-mental health product. This winter's newsletter highlights some of the innovative approaches developing from these pilots, including how they are addressing barriers to the uptake of e-mental health. [Read more about a virtual reality application called 'Lunchroom Sunday'.](#)

### **Influencing policy and practice:**

Combined expertise across the eMEN partners has supported our policy work, illustrated below by [a joint taskforce in Germany](#), [a roundtable in Northern Ireland](#), the [e-Nurture Network launch](#) and [e-mental health developments in Ireland](#).

### **Knowledge Sharing & Exchange:**

We have also been sharing knowledge about policy and research in new ways, through [cross-disciplinary events](#) like the November seminars on political, ethical and legal conditions for the use of e-mental health applications hosted in [Berlin, Germany](#), and [Rennes, France](#).

Knowledge-sharing events are being hosted by eMEN partners throughout the project, so if you



Chambaud. They both very much appreciated that the eMEN project partners organised this event at EHESP in Rennes.



[Please see the eMEN website for the full article](#)

Our next seminar is in London on 24 January 2019. For more information click [here](#).

## Interesting developments

### DGPPN´ s taskforce on E-Health

In a joint task force the German Association for Psychiatry, Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics (DGPPN) and the German Psychological Society (DGPs) developed quality criteria for internet-based self-management interventions. The aim of the joint work is to support users and mental health professionals in the selection of recommendable applications. In conclusion, eight criteria have been established, focusing on therapeutic quality requirements, patient and data security, and the effectiveness of the applications.

Several parties, like DGPPN´ s council of people with lived experience, relatives and professionals (Triologisches Forum), statutory health insurances, and developers have been involved in the process. The criteria could serve as the basis for a certification process that ensures the quality of

Internet-based (self-management) interventions. This could be an important step on the way into routine care. The paper will be published in the German peer-reviewed journal "Der Nervenarzt". A pre-published version is already available online: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00115-018-0591-4>

### Reducing depressive feelings with virtual reality

Can virtual reality help someone with a depression? Arq Psychotrauma Expert Group, VU University Amsterdam and an SME called IJsfontein believe so. In co-creation they have developed a virtual reality application called 'Lunchroom Sunday'. The application is developed within the e-Mental Health Center (eGGZ Centrum), a European Regional Development funded project which is also sponsored by the province of Noord-Holland. The project focuses on setting up an e-mental health center in the Netherlands.

Virtual Reality application Lunchroom Sunday is developed primarily for people with depressive feelings. The VR game is currently being tested and expectations of the developers and care institutes are high. Users are asked to put on a VR headset, after which they become a waiter in a virtual lunchroom. In the lunchroom they have to deal with different social situations. This is a very recognizable situation for most clients. The role of waiter makes it easier to approach different situations and to interact with other people, as this is what waiters do.

One of the scenarios of Lunchroom Sunday is a student who sits behind his laptop, with a cup of coffee. He thinks out loud: "I've been staring to this laptop for two hours without making any progress with my thesis. This is really hopeless!" He sighs deeply. "If I do not get anything on paper today, I will never achieve a decent career!" After this scene the computer responds: "What do you think, if you hear this? Do you agree with the student or can you maybe help him with an alternative thought?" After this question is answered by the patient, the treatment professional asks for more helping, alternative thoughts. If both parties are happy about what's been said, another scene can be played.

### *Cognitive behavioral therapy*

“Virtual Reality has already been used and proven effective for treating anxiety disorders”, says Annet Kleiboer, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychology. She is working at VU University Amsterdam and is involved in the development of Lunchroom Sunday. “The effectiveness of a virtual world for treating depression needs to be researched and proven”.



### *Next steps*

Currently Lunchroom Sunday is being tested and presented to mental healthcare institutes. The intention is to start using the VR application within a pilot in May 2019.

[Read the full version of this article on the eMEN website](#)

### **The Future of Digital Mental Health in Northern Ireland**

Roundtable discussions are currently being organised by the Mental Health Foundation as the UK partner in the eMEN project to explore critical issues related to policy development, specifically regarding the challenges, benefits and ethics of developing and implementing digital mental health technologies in the four countries of the UK. The overall aim of these discussions is to use key findings from each of the four countries to inform the eMEN project's Transnational Policy Solution document, with recommendations specific to the UK context.

It is well recognised that to alleviate the growing pressure on mental health services we need to deliver greater capacity, improve care pathways and reduce demand by delivering earlier interventions, taking preventative measures and tackling the stigma surrounding mental health. Among key stakeholders, it is increasingly acknowledged that the implementation of digitally enabled services, including digital tools and digital applications, might address some of these issues and assist in supporting, treating and preventing mental health problems. As a technique, a roundtable discussion is intended to identify problems and seek solutions in the relationship between, for example, formal decision makers, key stakeholders and other sectors of society for the purpose of consensus-building. It is designed to closely explore an identified issue, which can be used to define problems or questions, explore solutions, and develop actions or strategies that might adequately respond to these.

The first of four roundtables was held on December 6th 2018 in collaboration with Queen's University Belfast on “The Future of Digital Mental Health in Northern Ireland”. The discussion involved 16 participants from key stakeholder groups,

including leading academics, policy makers, lived experience, SMEs, healthcare professionals and service providers and focused on the role that digital technology can play in improving receipt and provision of mental health care in Northern Ireland. Diverse perspectives came into play, as each discussant identified what they consider to be the barriers and facilitators to the use of digital technologies for primary and secondary mental health care as well as more general use of digital tools within communities.

Practical solutions to the specific problems identified during the discussion were proposed. Elements of the discussion will be considered in terms of steering the academic research agenda over the coming five years. The stakeholders present were motivated by the conversation and expressed interest in continuing the collaboration in future roundtable discussions of the same theme.

### **The Nurture Network: Promoting Mental Health for Young People in a Digital World (e-Nurture)**

Gordon Harold (University of Sussex, PI), Sonia Livingstone (London School of Economics, Co-I), Elvira Perez-Vallejo (University of Nottingham (Co-I), Edmund Sonuga-Barke (Kings College London, Co-I), Tamsin Ford (University of Exeter, Co-I), Chris Hollis (University of Nottingham, Co-I)

The e-Nurture Network launch took place on November 30th 2018 in London, UK. This multidisciplinary research network aims to look at how children and young people are influenced by a digital world, and consider the challenges and opportunities that digital environments present. During the event, principle Investigator, Professor Gordon Harold (University of Sussex) perceptively reframed the age-old nature/nurture debate from the point of view of our contemporary digital era. From a developmental perspective, one could ask whether this is old wine new bottles, but it is much more than that. Children and young people are growing cognitively, emotionally and socially within environments that we know and understand relatively little about. Nowadays, as digital environments increasingly make their presence felt in everyday family and school life,

new challenges and opportunities for facilitating positive mental health for children are in our midst: digital environments now constitute a new dimension to the agencies of socialisation that research previously considered primary (parents, siblings, teachers, peers), and comprise a new social space that will equally influence children's social development and mental health.

The primary objective of the multi-disciplinary e-Nurture network is to explore how such / environments impact mental health and wellbeing. More specifically, the network aims to (1) explore how the digital environment has changed the ways in which children experience and interact with family, school and peer-based influences and what these changes mean for children's mental health, (2) identify how we can recognise and disentangle digital risks from opportunities when working with families, schools and professional agencies in developing intervention programmes to improve mental health outcomes for children and young people, and (3) identify how we effectively incorporate and disseminate this new knowledge to engage present and future practice models and the design and development of digital platforms and interventions aimed at promoting mental health and reducing negative mental health trajectories for young people.

The e-Nurture Network will engage a collaborative, cross sectoral approach to facilitating impacts by directly engaging academic, charity, industry, policy and front-line beneficiaries (e.g. families, parents, schools, teachers, children and young people).

### **eMental Health developments in Ireland**

There has been significant progression of the eMental health field in Ireland during 2018. Overall, we can see a growing coherence in activity focusing on leveraging eMental health's potential to address specific challenges in the mental healthcare system, and also on supporting broader improvement in the quality, range and reach of mental health services and supports. This involves an increasing coming-together of 'top-down' initiatives (from the Minister of State for Mental Health, Department of Health, HSE and



other players) and 'bottom-up' activities (including development/deployment of eMental health by third sector mental health providers, as well as clinician-led eMental health innovation).

The HSE's project Developing Digital Mental Health Supports in Ireland is a key vehicle for progressing eMental health within the mainstream mental health services and supports system. This has been developing a number of eMental health initiatives, including online information & signposting, telepsychiatry, telecounselling, and a crisis text service.

eMEN has become an important contributor to developments in Ireland. A core element of this is its support work with two eMental health product development and piloting programmes – eWELL and Pesky gNATs. The communications and awareness activities have also been influential. This includes the launch of a state-of-the-art report in eMental health and its potential contribution in Ireland, as well as a major seminar on eMental health in psychological practice organised by eMEN with the main professional Body (Psychological Society of Ireland).

## Upcoming FREE transnational seminars and conferences

Over the life of the project, eMEN is delivering 24 transnational events across Europe addressing e-mental health evidence-based innovations, quality, access and scale.

### **24th January 2019: London, UK** ***'Prevention with digital technologies: expanding the possibilities for better mental health'***

In the context of a changing healthcare landscape, this conference will be hosted by the Mental Health Foundation in collaboration with the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination and the Mental Health and Addictions Research Group at the University of York, which will examine the evidence behind long-term approaches for a future where digital technology can protect against problems and deliver good mental health for all.

Expert presentations, a panel discussion, poster presentations and a digital marketplace will focus on all levels of prevention: in primary and secondary healthcare and in relapse prevention.

For more information click [here](#).

### **28th March 2019: Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

#### ***'Let's make it work! Implementation of e-mental health care'***

Over the past 15 years a lot of e-mental health applications have been developed, but the implementation has often been less straightforward. Whereas the urgency for e-mental health is clear, the move towards structural and effective use of e-mental health seems to have reached a deadlock.

Which are the obstacles that stand in the way of a proper use? Is it organisations, lack of infrastructure, or is it fear of failure?

The eMen seminar about implementation aims to inspire attendees to have a fresh look at the possibilities of e-mental health.

*Let's make it work!* focuses on workable solutions and useful theories, presented by keynote speakers, developers and students. There are many wonderful opportunities and good practices from which we can learn. The seminar will also cover the new Dutch reimbursement system, which will be launched in the near future, and may be a next step to a more steadfast implementation of e-mental health.

The seminar is especially meant for managers, policy advisors, health care professionals, students, researchers and e-mental health developers.

Date: March 28, 2019

Time: 9:30 am – 4:30 pm

Location: VU University, Amsterdam

Organised by: Arq and VU University

More information: [See the event page](#) or download ['Save The Date'](#)

## Share our animation!

Our eMEN animation is available at [nweurope.eu/emen](http://nweurope.eu/emen). It explains the concept of e-mental health and the many ways it can support mental wellbeing. We encourage you to share this with your networks, embed it in your website and use it in your presentations.



## Why not join our transnational network?

eMEN is an e-mental health project running until November 2019, funded through the Interreg North West European Innovation Programme with a value of €5.36million. The six country partners are led by the Netherlands and include Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland and the UK, who together combine diverse technological, clinical, research, and policy expertise.

To receive updates on our future activities and connect to e-mental health stakeholders across Europe, we encourage you to [register to join our network](#).

We also welcome invitations to contribute to your event. Further contact information for all the partners is available at [www.nweurope.eu/emen](http://www.nweurope.eu/emen).