

Mobile Apps for Mental Healthcare:

Potential Benefits and Guidelines

Mobile apps

- Mobile apps are programs that run on smartphones and tablet computers that can be used by patients and HCPs to help manage several aspects of a patient's mental health¹



Potential benefits

- Help track symptoms²
- Provide education²
- Encourage patient self-management of mental health,² which could include using gamification principles to quantify their progress³
- Deliver therapy to patients in remote areas and in a timely manner¹
- Help manage commonly co-occurring illnesses, such as anxiety and depression³



Guidelines

- There are no industry-wide regulations informing on the efficacy of individual apps¹
- The APA has proposed a 5-step model for HCPs to evaluate the risks and benefits of health apps, through examining the following aspects⁴:
 - Background information on the app and its developers
 - Privacy risks associated with the use of patient data
 - Evidence for any health claims that the app makes
 - Ease of use for the patient
 - How the app shares data between patients and HCPs

References

1. Hategan A et al. *J Technol Behav Sci*. 2019;4:171-177.
2. Magee JC et al. *Curr Treat Options Psychiatry*. 2018;5:345-362.
3. Bakker D et al. *JMIR Ment Health*. 2016;3:e7.
4. American Psychiatric Association. App evaluation model. <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/mental-health-apps/app-evaluation-model>. 2019. Accessed October 28, 2019.

Abbreviations

APA, American Psychiatric Association;
HCP, healthcare provider.

Disclaimer

These resources are intended for informational purposes only and are intended for healthcare professionals who may choose to share them with their patients. They are not intended as, nor are they a substitute for, medical care, advice, or professional diagnosis. Healthcare professionals should use their independent medical judgement when considering these educational resources. Those seeking medical advice should consult with a healthcare professional. These resources are not intended as reimbursement or legal advice. Please seek independent advice from a qualified professional to ensure that your organization complies with the complex legal and regulatory requirements governing health care services, and that treatment decisions are consistent with the current applicable standards of care.