

Knowledge Synthesis: COVID-19 in Mental Health and Substance Use

Instructions:

The [Operating Grant: Knowledge Synthesis: COVID-19 in Mental Health and Substance Use](#) was designed to enable the development of rapid and timely knowledge syntheses and related knowledge mobilization plans to address evidence gaps and build the evidence base as part of the mental health and substance use response to COVID-19.

As outlined in the decision letters sent to successful applicants, this template is being provided in order to facilitate the rapid sharing of results with relevant [knowledge users](#). Information recorded in this report may be made available to policy makers, healthcare and service providers, partners, and the general public, and will be used to populate a website and inform a variety of CIHR knowledge mobilization products. Responses should be written in plain language, respecting word limits where indicated.

Email completed report to COVID19MH-COVID19SM@cihr-irsc.gc.ca by **Nov 23, 2020**

Synthesis Title: Depression In Community Residing Elders (DIRE): A Systematic Review of Depression Telemedicine Interventions for Older Adults Living in the Community.

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Target/priority population(s) in synthesis:

- Older adults, ≥60 years old, living in the community

What is the issue?

Depression is the single most common mental illness in older adults and it leads to significant day to day struggles. Older adults experiencing depressive symptoms, such as low mood, are often undertreated. One reason for under treatment is difficulty in accessing treatment. Social isolation worsens low mood, and many other symptoms of depression. During the COVID-19 pandemic, older adults are even more socially isolated and less able to seek care. There are virtual or telemedicine approaches using phones or computers, which healthcare providers could use during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide treatments for depression in older adults.

Key messages (max 100 words):

- ***Depression is the single most common mental illness in older adults and worsens people's day to day lives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these conditions are exacerbated because physical distancing leaves older adults without access to treatment. Our study found 14 articles that examined the effect of telehealth interventions on depression or depressive symptoms in older adults. We will do further research to find any other telehealth treatments for depression, and determine which interventions are most effective.***

How was the synthesis conducted?

Our goal was to determine what telemedicine strategies are available to reduce depressive symptoms in community-dwelling older adults. We reviewed existing studies in the literature. We looked in five literature databases and found 12,244 potential articles that we reviewed to see if they met our eligibility criteria. We found 13 studies that examined the impact of telehealth interventions on reducing depressive symptoms in community-dwelling older adults.

What did the synthesis find? Provide a lay summary of the outcomes (max 300 words):

We found that treatments most commonly consisted of internet cognitive behavioural therapy, telephone cognitive behavioural therapy or telephone psychotherapy. These treatments involved patients doing weekly modules focused on developing skills to address mood symptoms. In some cases, patients received weekly phone calls or emails from psychologists or counsellors to help them work through their therapy work. Many studies noted benefit from these treatments. Knowing which treatments are best will allow us to inform patients, doctors, and health care teams about how to best use these services, which will reduce the burden of depression in older adults.

What are the implications of this synthesis?

- There are telehealth treatments that we can use to reduce the burden of depression in community-dwelling older adults. The next phase of our knowledge synthesis will compare the effectiveness of these treatments to one another and identify which treatments are the best for reducing depressive symptoms in community-dwelling older adults.

List up to 10 keywords specific to this synthesis to facilitate website search filters and sorting:

(e.g. depression, virtual care, autism, opioids, racism, chronic pain, sleep, etc.)

- Depression
- Depressive Symptoms
- Mental Health
- Mood Disorders
- Older Adults
- Seniors
- Elderly
- Telehealth
- Virtual Care
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy