

KEY MESSAGES: Mental health and substance use impacts of COVID-19

INDIVIDUALS WITH A CHRONIC DISEASE OR CHRONIC PAIN, AND PATIENTS ON WAITLISTS



VIRTUAL INTERVENTIONS CAN BE EFFECTIVE IN IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH CHRONIC DISEASE AND CHRONIC PAIN

Digital mental health interventions (particularly internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy) are effective to improve anxiety, depression, distress and post-traumatic stress symptoms as well as quality of life in adults living with many chronic diseases.

Internet-based and telemedicine treatments can also be effective to reduce pain and depressive symptoms in individuals living with chronic pain.

For both children and adult populations, more evidence is needed to support the effectiveness of certain types of digital mental health interventions (e.g. online forums, telephone support, virtual reality), as well as self-guided smart phone apps, websites, online chats and forums, and text messages.

Virtual peer-support may be beneficial to patients on waitlists for procedures.



PATIENTS ON WAITLISTS FOR PROCEDURES DELAYED BY COVID-19 HAVE UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

Patients on waitlists for medical procedures delayed by the COVID-19 experience anxiety, depression, low quality of life, feel angry and frustrated, and have reduced trust in the healthcare system.

Caregivers of wait-listed individuals may have similar levels of depression and greater anxiety than patients themselves.

Teaching coping skills to wait-listed patients through in-person or online classes does not always reduce anxiety or depression, or improve quality of life, and may not be easy to implement.

Patients may prefer help from peers (support groups, peer mentors) and periodic communication about: reason for delay, their position on the wait list, in what order patients would be selected for procedures, and possible procedure date.

Learn more at <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52001.html>