



Mood Disorders Society of Canada
La Société Pour Les Troubles de L'Humeur du Canada



a place of mind

PRESS RELEASE

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Canada and China team up to tackle mental health – announcement on outskirts of APEC meetings in Da Nang *5-year technology project will enable better access to mental health treatments and patient-focused care*

OTTAWA AND DA NANG, VIETNAM, NOV. 9—As the Canadian government attends the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, the Canada-led APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health is proud to announce one of its first international collaborative projects and a \$2.15 million grant to implement new ways to address mental illness in Canada and China.

The grant, equally funded by Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and National Natural Sciences Foundation of China, is a five-year project called EMBED that will enable better access to timely and efficient mental health treatment through evidence-based research assisted by technology such as smartphone apps, text messaging and electronic medical records. Barriers to effective treatment in both economies include a lack of resources such as professional mental healthcare providers in remote areas and time psychiatrists and mental health experts can spend with patients in need. ‘Enhanced’ measurement-based care (eMBC) together with technology would break these barriers, said Dr. Raymond Lam, University of British Columbia professor and Canadian EMBED principal investigator.

“Canadian expertise is driving this,” said Lam, noting that it is very difficult to scale up human resources compared to the more than seven million Canadians and more than 300 million worldwide who are affected by mental illness. “Using technology to supplement ongoing care, access to clinicians and making tools available for patients means better health care outcomes for all. This model of scaling up technology will allow patients to work together with their doctors in eMBC and work as a collaborative partner.”

The Canadian-led Digital Hub, housed at UBC in partnership with the University of Alberta and the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, is essential to the project as it will deliver the technology and training materials and act as the centre point of collaboration between patients, health care professionals, researchers and governments. This project will create new knowledge about an evidence-based practice and how it can be best delivered. Showing that eMBC improves depression treatment and patient outcomes will also make it easier to fund and deliver eMBC programs in other areas in China, Canada, the Asia-Pacific and internationally.

International Trade Minister François-Philippe Champagne, currently meeting with global counterparts including China in and around APEC, highlighted Canada’s leadership on addressing mental health issues today. “I could not be more proud to highlight this Canada-led collaboration and update my colleagues across APEC economies on this innovative digital network with the potential to transform mental health knowledge and treatment across all of APEC’s 21 economies,” he said. “Achieving economic health takes a comprehensive approach and it is innovation like the Digital Hub that will help develop new approaches to improving mental wellness on an unprecedented global scale, not only through public sector support, but also private sector investments.”

The APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health is at the centre of an international super cluster of academia and businesses that will provide leadership to Canadians and the 2.8 billion people living in 21 APEC economies as a base of mental health knowledge and innovative service delivery. Focus areas include: Workplace Wellness and Resilience, Integration with Primary Care and Community Settings, Advocacy and Public Awareness, Vulnerable Communities



and Children, Mental Wellness of Indigenous Communities, Disaster Resilience and Trauma and Data Collection and Standardization.

“The Digital Hub will play a vital role at the patient level, helping clinicians use international best practices to treat those suffering from mental illness—making the Hub an applied implementation science backbone. Canada’s mental healthcare community will effectively be on the global front lines of an unprecedented international campaign for mental wellness,” said Phil Upshall, APEC Digital Hub chief financial officer. “Through its novel structure and approach, the Hub will serve as a regional incubator of new ideas for not only scientific research, but also collaborative training and education. We look forward to working with the federal government to tackle the \$50-billion mental healthcare crisis here at home and alongside our APEC partners.”

MP Lloyd Longfield said the Digital Hub is a strong example of how mental health can be addressed at a local level. Longfield, who represents the Ontario riding of Guelph where their community has a long history of supporting mental health research and treatments, said mental wellness is a cause that is extremely important to his constituents and himself. He encourages the federal government to further support the APEC Digital Hub in order to improve mental health outcomes not only in his community of Guelph but also nationally and globally — with 2.8 billion people in mind. “The Digital Hub is truly an innovative global effort to tackle an enormous issue that affects us all regardless of nationality,” he said.

With accelerated efforts to digitize the Hub over the past year, further projects in other focus areas are expected to be announced as partnerships and international collaborations continue to multiply and as the Hub leverages other opportunities to create new partnerships and jobs. Since its inception in 2015, almost 100 domestic and global partners have signed on and are keen to begin exchanges that will lead to enhanced Digital Hub engagement and mental health supports for Canadians and the 2.8 billion people across APEC economies.

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For more information

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About the APEC Digital Hub

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) foreign and trade ministers unanimously endorsed the creation of an international “Digital Hub,” to coordinate and promote advanced research from the world’s leading universities and health institutes involved in the diagnosis, treatment and awareness of mental disorders in 2015. Canada was selected to host it in partnership with the Mood Disorders Society of Canada, the University of British Columbia and the University of Alberta. The hub has benefited from support from the Government of Canada for its first-ever conference held in Vancouver, B.C., this past June, funded in part by the Public Health Agency of Canada to convene the Digital Hub’s Focus Area committees. Hub partners include government, academic and research, private-sector, non-governmental and advocacy organizations, ensuring projects both leverage and reflect the range of expertise, priorities, and needs of diverse stakeholders. Janssen Asia-Pacific contributed seed funding for the digital platform.

Hub: <https://apecmh.publivate.ca/> | <http://mentalhealth.apec.org/>

Video: <http://bit.ly/2oauqkA>

2018 pre-budget submission: <http://bit.ly/2018PBS-APECDigitalHub>

Report from Vancouver conference: <http://bit.ly/2AoveY7>

Video of former Health Minister speaking to Vancouver delegates: <http://bit.ly/2m76rFI>