

For Immediate Release

Oxford VR ramps up global expansion with first-of-kind VR-enabled mental health solutions launch in Asia

<https://vimeo.com/342694721>

(17 June 2019, London) Oxford VR has today announced the launch of its leading-edge treatment for common mental health conditions through a unique partnership with AXA HK and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). The initiative called '**Yes I Can**', will offer a ground-breaking treatment using virtual reality (VR) technology. It will be free to the public and to AXA's corporate customers as part of their employee benefits services to drive better mental health outcomes in Asia.

In Hong Kong, where one in seven HK people has a mental health problem such as anxiety and depression,¹ a new survey conducted this month reveals that 71% of the respondents have experienced at least one symptom of social avoidance due to anxiety or depression, such as avoiding a social gathering, having to do a presentation/talk at work or interacting with a stranger due to anxiety or stress. Conducted by YouGov, the survey also shows that one in eight (13% say they would be unable to have a conversation about a mental wellbeing issue with a partner or close family member. The main reasons cited are 36% of them think that discussing mental wellbeing could change how others perceive them, whereas 27% say they can't afford the time or money to seek professional mental health services.

Barnaby Perks, CEO at Oxford VR said "***This is a solution whose time has come, and we are very excited to collaborate with AXA Hong Kong and CUHK to launch our VR treatment programme. Technology holds the key to making high-quality mental health care more patient-centred and accessible. This strategic partnership with AXA HK and The Chinese University of Hong Kong exemplifies our global leadership role in creating ground-breaking, clinically-validated, VR-enabled mental health solutions which have the capacity to bring unprecedented change to healthcare outcomes in the region.***"

The programme's focus will be on people struggling with stress, worry and low mood. Stress is an inevitable part of daily working life, but when it gets out of control it can lead to reduction in mood and increased worry which, over time, can turn into anxiety and depression, with intrusive thoughts leading to withdrawal and avoidance of social situations in the mistaken belief that interaction with others is the cause. But this withdrawal leads to lower mood and greater anxiety in a vicious cycle. Our evidence-based approach breaks and reverses this vicious cycle using VR to enable users to challenge their intrusive thoughts through positive experiences from social tasks guided by a virtual avatar coach in various virtual environments.

Users are gradually and systematically exposed to powerful simulations of everyday environments such as a Café, Bus, Street, Doctor's Waiting Room and Convenience Store where they are guided by a virtual coach through a series of tasks that trigger anxiety. Because users know that these simulations are not real, they have the confidence to try things that they would normally avoid, enabling them to challenge and overcome their intrusive thoughts.

Gordon Watson, Chief Executive Officer of AXA Asia said "***Yes I Can***' is about changing the status quo by offering a highly innovative and high-quality mental health solution free to members of the public in need and to our corporate customers as part of their employee benefits services free access. We aim to changes lives in Asia, with Hong Kong pioneering this initiative in breaking new ground."

¹ Department of Health

“CUHK is committed to translating our excellent academic research to address global challenges and benefit humanity. Applying automation and VR technology to treatment can increase the accessibility of mental health services in a format that the public may find less stigmatizing and much easier to embrace. By building up an evidence base of VR therapeutic experience in the Chinese context, we hope to expand the pioneering mental health services delivery modes in Hong Kong and Greater China.” said Professor Rocky S. Tuan Vice-Chancellor / President, CUHK.

In Hong Kong and China, there is a shortage of trained professionals to cater to the huge unmet mental health care need. One million people in Hong Kong and 173 million people in China suffer from common mental health conditions. It takes around 3 years to see a psychiatrist for 6 minutes in Hong Kong, with 1.49 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, and in China it's 2.02 per 100,000. The WHO recommends a ratio of 10:100,000. The programme under **Yes I Can** does not require a highly trained professional to operate the service as the delivery of consistently high-quality treatment is already built into the programme.

The **Yes I Can** initiative provides participants with six to eight 30-minute VR sessions over a period of 3 to 6 weeks. It is intended for use by adults who are 18 or above, and the localised version will be offered in both English and Cantonese. The partnership under AXA Hong Kong, CUHK and Oxford VR also includes a clinical research study which involves the recruitment of more than 250 members of the public as participants. For more details about the programme, please visit: <https://oxfordvr.org/>.

About Oxford VR

Oxford VR is a global pioneer in developing leading-edge VR-enabled therapy building on almost two decades of ground-breaking clinical research by Daniel Freeman, Professor of Clinical Psychology at Oxford University, Chief Clinical Officer and co-founder of Oxford VR. The potential of OVR's programmes to treat a wide range of mental health conditions has been demonstrated in a landmark clinical trial, published in The Lancet Psychiatry in August 2018, which showed treatment effectiveness of equal to, if not superior to face-to-face therapy. OVR is committed to developing evidence-based, cost-effective and scalable solutions that build mental health care capacity in primary and secondary care by taking advantage of cutting-edge VR technologies. Patients are gradually and systematically exposed to simulations of everyday situations that trigger symptoms. Oxford VR's immersive treatment scenarios and activities are so compelling and life-like that patients experience the same emotional and physical response that they would in similar real-life situations. In a field of therapy where patient drop-out is high, Oxford VR's leading-edge treatment provides a superior mental health treatment experience using powerful and compelling VR to deliver automated, protocolised cognitive behavioural therapy.

About AXA Hong Kong and Macau

AXA Hong Kong and Macau, a member of the AXA Group, prides itself on serving over 1 million customers^[1] in the region. In addition to being the #1 global Property & Casualty commercial lines insurer^[2], it has also been the #1 insurance brand worldwide for 10 consecutive years^[3]. In Hong Kong and Macau, AXA is one of the top medical insurance providers and No. 1 in corporate medical insurance.

About CUHK

Founded in 1963, CUHK is a leading comprehensive research university with a global reputation. Located in the heart of Asia, CUHK has a vision and a mission to combine tradition with modernity, and to bring together China and the West. All faculties are actively engaged in research in a wide range of disciplines, with an array of research institutes and research centres specialising in interdisciplinary research of the highest quality. CUHK is recognised as the most innovative university in Hong Kong and is ranked 22nd in the Asia-Pacific region by the latest 'Reuters: Asia Pacific's Most Innovative Universities' listing. The University currently has more than 900 granted patents in different jurisdictions worldwide. Some of these patents have been licensed to relevant industries that help bring these innovations to the market to benefit society. In the academic year 2017-18, CUHK received 185 granted patents and filed 327 patent applications for inventions

developed in the areas of medical technology, biotechnology, information technology, telecommunications and materials science.

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