

For Immediate Release

UK VR Therapy Pioneer Oxford VR teams up with US National Mental Health Innovation Center

- US-UK collaboration involves multiple pilots which aim to increase access to innovative evidence-based psychological therapy treatment programs using virtual reality technology.



(25 JUL 19 COLORADO, US) [The National Mental Health Innovation Center](#) (NMHIC) and [Oxford VR](#) (OVR) have announced a strategic partnership and the launch of multiple pilots using VR therapy treatment programs to advance mental health outcomes. The collaboration will involve testing of Oxford's VR's suite of automated evidence-based treatment programs, which use leading-edge virtual reality (VR) technology to treat mental health conditions such as fear of heights, social anxiety, depression and OCD and psychosis.

NMHIC's mission is to find, develop and put into practice big new ideas to prevent, treat and change the way people think about mental health. OVR is a global pioneer in the development of clinically-validated VR therapy for a range of mental health problems using immersive technology based on proven treatment protocols. This US-UK partnership signifies an important collaboration to improve access to innovative mental health care treatments that have the potential to drive a major-breakthrough in mental health access and outcomes and provide important insights into global applications.

Speaking about the announcement, Mimi McFaul, Deputy Director at NMHIC said **"We thoroughly vet technology companies and look for specific quality metrics. This includes whether or not the technology is backed by research, is scalable, and has the potential for significant clinical impact. OVR meets all of these criteria and approaches mental health innovation with scaling and clinical impact in mind."**

Also commenting on this significant partnership, Barnaby Perks, Founding CEO of Oxford VR said: **"We are very excited to partner with NMHIC which is a world-renowned organization. Our collective vision is to turn the tide on life-interrupting mental illnesses by pushing the boundaries of clinical research excellence and technology to transform outcomes for service users. VR therapy is an evidence-based treatment whose time has come and can hugely benefit both clinicians and service users with its user-centered design and digitally-enabled solution. Great care has been taken to make the treatment programs clinically challenging yet also engaging and even fun by leveraging exciting gamification technology."**

VR therapy treatment is stand-alone and automated, which makes the OVR therapies one-of-a-kind because they can be used by themselves or as an added, innovative tool to progress existing cognitive treatments. In a single-blind, parallel-group, randomized controlled trial of OVR's fear of heights treatment program, participants who received the VR therapy showed a reduction in fear of heights, with an average reduction of 68.0%. The results indicated that the treatment was at least as good, if

not better than face-to-face treatment for fear of heights demonstrating its huge potential to treat a wide range of mental health conditions. The findings of this landmark clinical trial were published in The Lancet Psychiatry in July 2018. This research was funded by the UK National Health Service (NHS) National Institute of Health Research to improve mental health access and outcomes.

OVR's fear of heights program, uses virtual reality technology to simulate heights safely so that users can experience and work through their fears and anxieties in a controlled environment. Users are guided by a virtual therapist through a series of tasks in a simulated shopping mall. By completing the series of tasks, users learn that they can use coping skills taught by the virtual coach to manage situations they previously found frightening.

The VR therapy will be implemented with the help of several community partners participating in the NMHIC Tech Innovation Network (TIN), including Mental Health Center of Denver (MHCD), who have played an integral part in the TIN network, championing for innovative approaches to address mental health. The TIN, a first-of-its-kind concept, is a network of diverse clinical and community partners that leverages innovative technology to augment, accelerate and facilitate effective mental health services across a range of settings. The exciting partnership between NMHIC and OVR marks a big stride towards increased accessibility to mental health treatments.

Debbie Boeldt, Director of Digital Mental Health at NMHIC said **"We have learned a tremendous amount from the TIN. Members of the network are eager to engage in trying new technology for mental health. Through our partnership with community partners, we often hear about barriers related to limited access to technology for mental health and a shortage of mental health providers. OVR provides an opportunity for clients to receive services through an evidence-based VR program."**

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Editor's Notes

About NMHIC

The National Mental Health Innovation Center was founded in 2016 at the University of Colorado's Anschutz Medical Campus with a simple goal: to find ways to address urgent mental health crises in the United States through innovative thinking and the development of new approaches to treating, managing, diagnosing and preventing mental illness. NMHIC focuses on technology that leads to more effective mental health interventions that are scalable, cost-effective and have strong potential for impact. The Center has developed a first of its kind model engaging both communities, academia and industries to create technology-driven solutions called the Tech Innovation Network (TIN). The TIN is a testbed of organizations of all types, in communities across Colorado and the nation, through which NMHIC can collectively help tech companies develop and test a wide range of technologies. The Center strives to create new models for care and prevention for mental health.

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 programs to treat a wide range of mental health conditions has been demonstrated in a landmark clinical trial, published in The Lancet Psychiatry in July 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, protocolized cognitive behavioral therapy.