AB026. Cross-regional collaboration to promote digital mental health equity in the Asia Pacific in the context of coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

Jill Murphy[1], Erin E. Michalak[1],
Andrew Greenshaw[2], Chee H. Ng[3],
Arun Ravindran[4], Mellissa Withers[5],
Promit Ananyo Charkraborty[1], Raymond W. Lam[1]

[1]Psychiatry, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada; [2]Psychiatry, University of Alberta, Canada; [3]Psychiatry, University of Melbourne, Australia; [4]University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada; [5]Institute on Inequalities in Global Health, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, USA

Correspondence to: Jill Murphy, Psychiatry, The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. Email: jill.murphy@ubc.ca.

Background: The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has led to an unprecedented shift to the use of digital mental health technologies. While this presents an opportunity to improve access to care, there is a risk of excluding populations experiencing barriers to digital health access. The APEC Digital Hub for Mental Health ('the Digital Hub') and the Research on Mental Health Equity in the Asia Pacific-Digital Research Cluster (REMAP-Digital) have developed a cross-regional collaboration to advance research on digital mental health equity in the Asia Pacific. The objectives of this presentation are: (I) to present the results of a study identifying barriers and opportunities for equitable digital mental health care; and (II) to introduce opportunities for cross-regional collaboration.
Methods: We use a mixed method, modified Delphi consensus approach consisting of consultations with policy makers (n=8), healthcare providers (n=7) and people with lived experience (n=8), and an online survey (n=2578). We used thematic analysis to identify key themes emerging from the consultations. Survey analysis consisted of descriptive statistics, *T*-tests and ANOVA to identify associations between the relevant key variables.
Results: Results identified (I) several populations at risk of experiencing access barriers to digital mental health care, (II) key access and delivery barriers from the perspective of service users and providers, (III) resources and approaches needed to improve equitable digital care access.
Conclusions: Digital mental health presents an opportunity to improve access to care, but its delivery must prioritize access by vulnerable populations. Cross-regional recommendations for best practices can help to support the equitable delivery of digital care. The collaboration led by the Digital Hub and REMAP-Digital cluster has great potential to advance evidence to guide Asia Pacific countries to maximize the delivery of equitable digital mental health care.
Keywords: Mental health; digital health; coronavirus disease (COVID-19); equity; Asia Pacific

Acknowledgments

Footnote