

TEEN MOOD DISORDER STUDY GOES CELLULAR

TORONTO/ONTARIO/(Sept. 8, 2010) — Teens are now able to use cell phones for more than just keeping in touch with friends. In a new study, they can also use the technology to monitor their moods.

“This research is intended to test the tools that will help us to identify youth with mental illness, and better connect them to healthcare providers,” says Dr. David Kreindler, principal investigator of the study and youth psychiatrist and researcher in the Mood Disorders Program at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto. “It may also help us to learn more about the role that life stressors play in youth with mood disorders such as depression and bipolar disorder.”

With support from Motorola, Sunnybrook has developed teen-friendly mood monitoring technology directed at youth between the ages of 14-20, an age demographic with one of the highest risks of developing mood disorders and other mental health issues. According to recent federal research, it is conservatively estimated that as many as 15% of youth are affected with mental illness at any given time and are the least likely of all age groups to use any resources for mental illness and addiction.

“Mood disorders can significantly negatively impact an individual’s social, occupational, and academic functioning,” says Dr. Anthony Levitt, a co-investigator in the study and Chief of Psychiatry at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

The research participants will be required to complete a daily mood and stress report questionnaire on a Motorola mobile phone provided to them, to record any kinds of events that may be affecting how they feel in their day-to-day activities. Information from the questionnaire is immediately relayed to the researchers’ database wirelessly. This kind of technology has the potential to help determine what, if any, treatment a teen may need and to track the teen’s state of illness or health.

“The daily questionnaires – and electronic mood journal – helps to better-engage participants in their own care, form an ongoing connection with their health care provider and make it easier for them to ask for help when needed,” adds Dr. Kreindler, also an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at University of Toronto.

Mood diaries are a recommended standard of care in bipolar disorder, and electronic diaries are superior to traditional diaries because of portability, accuracy, convenience and their ability to remind users when they should be completed. Using Motorola mobile phones will allow the researchers to assess whether study participants will more readily complete a daily questionnaire, which should be more appealing to a youth demographic, considering the majority of teens have their own cell phone.

“Through our Raise Your Voice program, Motorola is committed to helping Canadian youth, supporting organizations that give young people the opportunity to speak up about issues that are important to them,” says Marianne Hamilton, Motorola Canada. “This partnership with Sunnybrook provides an opportunity for Motorola’s technology to make a difference for youth who need help, and it is our hope that through Sunnybrook’s research many more youth will ultimately have the opportunity to raise their voices.”

For more information on this study, please visit:
www.sunnybrook.ca/content/?page=Dept_Psych_Res

Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre is inventing the future of health care for the one million patients the hospital cares for each year through the dedication of its more than 10,000 staff and volunteers. Internationally recognized leadership in research and education and a full affiliation with the University of Toronto distinguish Sunnybrook as one of Canada’s premier academic

health sciences centres. Sunnybrook specializes in caring for Canada's war veterans, high-risk pregnancies, critically-ill newborns, adults and the elderly, and treating and preventing cancer, cardiovascular disease, neurological and psychiatric disorders, orthopaedic and arthritic conditions and traumatic injuries.

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