

# Digital Mental Health

## A real opportunity for healthcare or technology-driven solutionism?

Bonn, 22.11.2022

With 15 speakers from 4 continents, on average 45 participants over the 3 days, and perspectives ranging from WHO to a SME, psychiatry to ethics, the view of a Tarascan Mestiza and young African people, the GLOHRA workshop on Global Digital Mental Health was truly interdisciplinary and cross-sectional. For maximum inclusiveness the workshop was held completely online, and spread over three days from 14 to 16 November 2022. The event was organized by six GLOHRA members, affiliated with the University of Augsburg, University Hospital Bonn, Charité University Medicine Berlin, University Medical Center Freiburg, Leibniz Institute for Prevention, Research and Epidemiology – BIPS, Bremen, and the University Hospital Ulm.

The workshop followed an innovative approach to research collaboration: Participants were asked at the beginning what the main issues of Global Digital Mental Health are for them. These ideas were captured on a digital whiteboard.

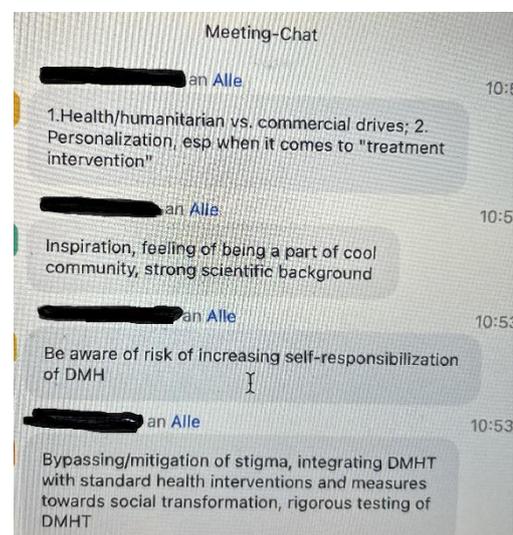


Besides referring back to these initial thoughts in the overarching discussions, the whiteboard was also central for the even more interactive part of the workshops. Participants had the opportunity to either sign up to the workshop 'without further commitment' or 'with interactive and ongoing engagement'. The first option consisted of listening to the inputs,

getting a general idea of what Global Digital Mental Health is and joining the general discussion. The scope of the interactive option went beyond that by further in-depth sessions with an active collaboration aiming at jointly writing a scientific article. Besides the six workshop organizers, 11 participants signed up to this option and currently co-write a viewpoint on the 'Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Global Digital Mental Health'. First results of ethical considerations and implications that also have been mapped in these deep dives are presented at the DGPPN Congress 2022.

Throughout the three days the question whether digital mental health technologies are a real opportunity for healthcare or technology-driven solutionism was discussed controversially, revealing the complexity of the field. As two participants concluded: It is a "walk between potential and challenges". The "new technology and old problems" need to be considered in light of cultural and contextual adaptation, participation and co-design.

When asked again about their thoughts at the end of the workshop, participants not only pointed out new takes on Digital Mental Health Technology (DMHT), but also stressed the worth of



an open exchange for their own academic career. With "the need to also look at social determinants of mental health which digital technology tends to ignore" the workshop was just the start of ongoing engagement of researchers within and beyond GLOHRA to investigate the field of Global Digital Mental Health. To keep this engagement alive and foster interdisciplinary research that can inform policymakers and possibly influence future technology developments for a better, the workshop organizers aim at continuing this exchange by setting up a Global Digital Mental Health Research Network in 2023.