Telemedicine Project

The Young Adult and Family Center at UCSF serves troubled young adults, adolescents, and their families with mental healthcare needs. We want all young people who are suffering to know where to turn and not to be ashamed to seek the help they need. Our goal is to explore innovative technological solutions in the treatment of mental illness utilizing internet-based applications, video conferencing, Facebook style social media communications, text messaging, and mobile devices. We are working to create a trusted, more efficient brand of expert mental healthcare that facilitates access, decreases utilization costs, and improves communication between doctors, patients, and families.

Why telemedicine?

Three primary barriers prevent us from delivering mental healthcare services to young people who need them. Through the use of innovative technologies we hope to break down these barriers and provide expert care and support to those who need it.

- **The stigma of mental healthcare** - Mental healthcare often carries the additional burden of shame and the perception of weakness, which inhibits help seeking behavior.
- **The cost of mental healthcare** - Young people often lack the time, insurance or other financial resources necessary to obtain quality care. Mental health clinics often have long wait lists and limited scopes of practice. Traditional mental healthcare paradigms are time-consuming and labor-intensive. They are difficult to scale and distribute. They are too expensive and many of them have not been scientifically validated.
- **The absence of a 'trusted brand' in mental healthcare** - There is no mental health equivalent of Planned Parenthood, a brand that young people trust when they need reproductive healthcare services. We need to establish a brand of mental healthcare services that young people and their families will reach out to when they need help. And we need a distribution system that operates under that brand that is capable of delivering the services that they need.

In medical practice, the personal connection between a doctor and a patient, and the ease of their communication, is as essential to the healing process as any medication or procedure. Kim Norman, MD [1], and his staff of clinicians, in partnership with Salesforce [2] and the UCSF Information Services Unit [3] have begun research on how internet-based and mobile communications, including text messaging and video conferencing, can significantly improve the practice of medicine.

Social media services like Facebook have dramatically increased the level of communication in our society. In the development of the UCSF Telemedicine Program, we believe that we can use similar technologies in medicine to increase positive treatment outcomes by improving communication between patients, doctors, and their families. The goal is to create a telemedicine laboratory? at the Young Adult and Family Center that will study how doctors
can use powerful, new internet-based technologies to break down the barriers to care and to provide better mental health services to more young people.

**Our projects**

**Next Mission** [4]

- A series of innovative, strategic and interactive online college level courses developed and taught by UCSF faculty members. These online courses, available to any active duty service member or veteran around the world, allow current or former members of our armed forces to earn college credits or military promotion points.

**Ask An Expert**

- **Anonymous interactive website**: Using searchable database technology we have created Ask An Expert @ UCSF. By empowering people through health information, the site promotes behavioral change. It is the only Q&A forum of its kind to be linked to therapeutic and clinical services.
- **Q&A forum**: Our website provides a space for individuals to ask UCSF experts any type of health question as well as to search our database of anonymous Q&As.
- **Self-help screening assessments and therapeutics**: Includes tools for quitting smoking, managing anxiety and depression, along with many more, all paired with a resource guide to access local clinicians as well as our UCSF team of physicians.
- **Youth-oriented media**: Enables group discussions, Public Service Announcements, doctor interviews, YouTube style videos and expert health blogs.

**Social Network Platform**

**Mobile Social Networking**

- **Synchronous and asynchronous communication**: Used for doctor to patient and doctor to doctor communication, including instant messaging, video chat, text and video journaling on a familiar easy to use interface. Patients interact with other patients, families, or friends facing similar challenges by posting videos and messages on their pages or by communicating in clinician-moderated therapy rooms.
- **Nagstr**: Short Messaging Service (SMS) allows doctors to text patients about their treatment plans, as well as send positive healing.
- **Mobile applications**: All of our therapeutics will be accessible on mobile platforms such as the iPhone, Android, and BlackBerry. New therapeutics in the mobile app format will create an 'intelligent' health companion.

**Secure Communication**
Security: Using a HIPAA-compliant, password-protected and filter-protected database, we provide capabilities for physicians to privately upload medical records that enables coordinated and collaborative treatment planning.

Real-time consultations: Doctors will have the ability to provide second opinions, supervise treatments, disseminate new findings, and teach new methodologies to fellow physicians and students, as well as consult with patients anywhere in the world.

Asynchronous care: Patients and veterans enrolled in UCSF’s Armed Forces Academic Resources and doctors can communicate easily and confidentially using our Facebook-style interface. Over 500 million people around the world already enjoy the ease and utility of this technology. Why not doctors and patients?

Core faculty and staff

- Kim Norman, MD [1]
- Sabrina Darrow, PhD [5]
- Michael Godoy [8]
- Abara Ijiomah [7]
- Lori Lavinthal, MFT [8]
- Sheening Lin, PhD [9]

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Links
[6] https://directory.ucsf.edu/people/search/id/122429
[7] https://directory.ucsf.edu/people/search/id/96693
[8] https://directory.ucsf.edu/?q=Lori+Lavinthal
[9] https://directory.ucsf.edu/people/search/id/111999