

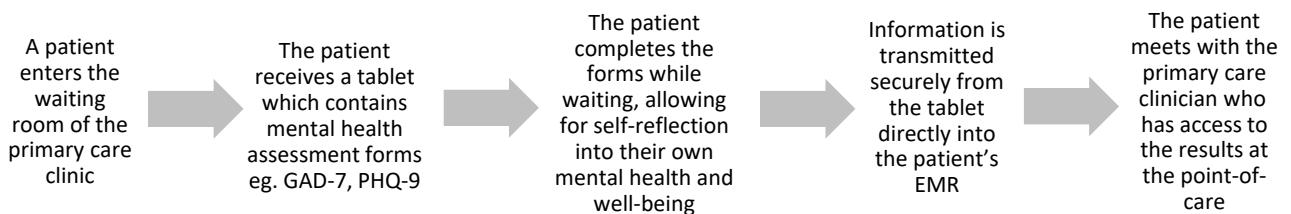


## Patient forms: A case study on enhancing the patient experience and enabling more accurate mental health assessments

**Mental health assessments completed by patients on tablets while waiting to see their primary care clinician facilitate more honest responses from patients who may not be comfortable discussing details about their mental health in a face-to-face interaction. For the clinician, the assessments support a more comprehensive picture of the patient's mental health condition, treatment goals, and potential risk for suicide, thereby reducing the probability of a patient's condition being misdiagnosed and the patient falling through the cracks, as well as ensuring that a safety plan for the patient is created where appropriate.**

Mental health-related stigma can be a major barrier for individuals trying to reach out for help and discuss their mental health concerns with a healthcare provider.<sup>1,2</sup> Giving patients tablets to complete questionnaires while they wait to see their primary care provider has shown promising results for gathering crucial patient information regarding mental health concerns and bridging the communication gap between patient and primary care clinician.<sup>3</sup>

In partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association Waterloo Wellington, the eHealth Centre of Excellence has provided tablets to 13 clinics to support mental health assessments using standardized questionnaires (such as PHQ-9 and GAD-7) while patients wait in the waiting room, allowing them adequate time to answer the questions attentively and without feeling judged. **Incorporating tablets as part of the patient's journey focuses on putting the patient's needs first:**



**“The tablet provided a comfortable medium in which I could honestly communicate my feelings regarding my mental health. I like that it gave me time to think over my responses and really analyze my feelings. If I had been talking one on one with the doctor, I may have not wanted to pause as long to think about my answer.**

**The questions also made me realize areas of my life affected by my mental health that I would have never connected on my own. I think this piece of technology is a great way for people to share their thoughts in a very comfortable, low pressure way.”**

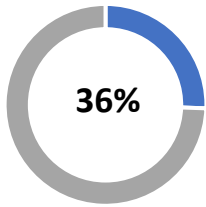
Erin B., Patient

**“In the past and before the tablets were implemented into our workflow, patients may have downplayed their mental health condition.**

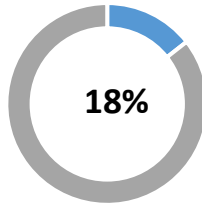
**With the technology integrated into our practice, the tablet allows the patient to focus on how they are feeling and provide more details than he/she would otherwise provide, ensuring that we have a productive appointment that meets their needs.”**

Dr. Patel-Christopher, MD, and  
Cathy Davis, RN  
Dr. Abha Patel-Christopher's Office

Ninety-two per cent of patients responded positively (n=1,907), indicating that the tablets were easy to use. In addition, tablets enhanced the patients' ability to communicate, helping them to feel more comfortable answering difficult questions, and allowing clinicians to reach a greater proportion of individuals.



*indicated that using the tablet helped them provide more honest answers*



*would not have liked to answer the mental health assessment questions during a face-to-face chat with their healthcare provider*

Tablets empower patients to discuss mental health and enhance their ability to communicate sensitive details.

When patients answer the questions honestly, the primary care clinician is able to **assess suicide risk more effectively** and ensure that patients at risk receive appropriate treatment or referral to the hospital on an urgent basis.

Tablets create a new option **for patient-provider communication**, allowing patients to **provide a more comprehensive assessment** so that the clinician has more information at the point-of-care to evaluate treatment options with the patient.

Tablet use **saves time by providing relevant information at the point-of-care**, allowing for a more productive patient-clinician interaction to discuss and evaluate treatment options rather than having the clinician take a history or wait for a patient to complete a paper-based form during the encounter.

The patient and their clinician can **follow the patient's treatment progress** more objectively since the mental health assessment scores can be graphed when the patient completes the standardized questionnaires on the tablet.

If you have any questions or would like further information on this case study, contact [communications@ehealthce.ca](mailto:communications@ehealthce.ca).

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Published: February 2018 (Original)

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