

Going Online for Mental Health: *Our story about going beyond our clinic's doors*

Submitted by: Laura MacNiven, Director, Springboard Clinic

Since we opened Springboard Clinic in 2009, we have heard so many stories of individuals from across Ontario who have not had the opportunity to access support for their mental health difficulties. Technology is starting to change that, and Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) is making it possible for patients to access specialist care, even when they live far from major hospital centres. Bringing customized and compassionate mental health support to rural communities is an exciting and innovative new space, which we feel excited to be part of.

It was about a year ago when our team started to seriously ask the question: "Could we offer a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary ADHD/mental health assessment online?" At first, we thought of all the challenges, like how to maintain confidentiality, and ensure a safe and secure space where we can connect with our clients. As you often do with a big change, we started by focusing on the difficulties.

And if we were going to enter the online assessment space, we wanted to make sure that we could offer an experience that would allow individuals to feel heard, explore questions about themselves, assess their attention and mental health symptoms, even if we weren't going to be physically in the same room. As we moved from more of a "fear" mindset to one of opportunity, we started to really see how this could broaden our reach and we have come full circle on our perception about online assessments (and realized that it isn't very different from online coaching/therapy, which we have been offering for years!) We now believe that this technology can truly help people and can encourage more individuals to go through the process of understanding ADHD and themselves through an assessment.

We have been so impressed with the level of security offered through OTN and are confident in our ability to maintain the same privacy standards we have at the clinic. We have found that after a few minutes of getting used to the technology, you forget you aren't in the same room, and just start focusing on what's important - listening to our clients' stories. We are so hopeful about how this outreach is going to impact adults from all walks of life in Ontario.

We believe that when you need medical/psychological support, you should have the opportunity to work with a team who is truly specialized in the area where you are seeking help. As we all feel more comfortable about video-conferencing in general, we have realized that you truly can get the help that you need, and develop a close relationship with your health team, even if you are miles away.

If you, or anyone you know is thinking of offering services or accessing help online for mental health, I think you will be amazed at how great the experience is. One thing we know for sure, when it comes to mental health treatment, the sooner you seek help, the better.

***Please note:** Springboard is a private clinic. The comprehensive assessment is considered psychological services and therefore fees are eligible for reimbursement under many insurance plans. Individuals who do an online assessment will be referred back to their family doctor for ongoing care. If interested, online coaching/therapy sessions are an option for long-term remote support. For details regarding Springboard Clinic fees, please visit springboardclinic.com.*

To learn more about Ontario Telemedicine Network, check out their website: otn.ca

To learn more about Springboard Clinic's Online ADHD/Mental Health Assessment, check out this video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=19&v=g3_kUBPiDb8