



# THE IALH UPDATE

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## Mobile Health Interventions for Opioid-Related Harm



In a recent study, Elizabeth Borycki, an IALH faculty affiliate in the School of Health Information Science, and colleagues at UVic and the Dalla Lana School of Public Health in Toronto explored how mobile health (mHealth) technologies could be used to manage opioid-

related harm. The specific objectives of this study were to: a) examine current knowledge regarding mHealth technologies in relation to opioid-related harm; and b) identify gaps and technological opportunities for improvement.

The World Health Organization has defined mHealth as “medical and public health practice [that is] supported by mobile devices such as mobile phones, patient monitoring devices, personal digital assistants and other wireless devices.” mHealth technologies have been used as interventions to manage chronic conditions including treatments for substance abuse. However, little is known regarding how the technologies may be able to support individuals thorough their patient journey from being at risk, to an addiction diagnosis, to being involved in a treatment program, and finally, to recovery. Patient Journey Mapping is a methodology that can be used to visually document an individual’s travel through the health care system. It can be used to identify strengths as well as barriers and challenges to obtaining care while also identifying opportunities for improvement and innovation.

The study included a literature review of the use of mHealth technologies by opioid users as well as the development of a Patient Journey Map. The literature review indicated that mHealth interventions (such as mobile phones and tablets) are:

- a) accessible — over 80% of participants in the reviewed studies owned a mobile phone, although many had pay-as-you-go contracts; homeless individuals were less likely to have access to a mobile phone;
- b) utilized — participants used mobile phones for making calls and texting with supports (such as counsellors);
- c) acceptable — participants were willing to use mobile phones, tablets, text messaging and behavioural interventions to support recovery from addiction;
- d) feasible to implement — although training on programs, regular contact to ensure phone numbers are up-to-date, and subsidized phones and/or payment plans may be required; and
- e) able to improve appointment adherence, participation in treatment programs, and completion of goals.

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Use of a Patient Journey Map indicated that most mHealth interventions have been targeted to individuals starting treatment for opioid addiction in community-based and/or hospital treatment settings. The researchers recommended that future mHealth interventions focus on the at-risk, prevention, diagnosis and post-recovery phases of the patient journey. This could include using mHealth technologies to: disseminate information on pharmacology and health risks; deliver drug prevention information through various types of apps; provide educational programs prior to treatment; monitor adherence to treatment; and facilitate connections with peers. The researchers noted that patient oriented and participative design approaches could be used to create effective technology interventions for all individuals.

For more information, see <https://doi.org/10.34105/j.kmel.2020.12.025>

## UVic Health Initiative

Nathan Lachowsky, an Associate Professor in the School of Public Health and Social Policy and IALH Faculty Affiliate, started his role as Special Advisor Health Research in February 2021. One of his key responsibilities is to support the development and implementation of the UVic Health Initiative (formerly the Health Sciences Initiative), a joint activity of the Offices of the Vice-President Research and Innovation and Vice-President Academic and Provost. The goal of the initiative is to develop strategies to enhance the quality and improve the profile of health research, programs and related activities at UVic. Nathan recently provided an update on UVic Health Initiative activities:

- IALH is well positioned to assist with the implementation of the UVic Health Initiative, in part because of its emphasis on lifelong health, aging, mental health, and translational medicine.
- Thirteen Collaborative Health Grants and six Research Accelerator Funds were provided by UVic for the first time this year. For more information see <https://www.uvic.ca/research/learnabout/home/strategic-initiatives/uhi/index.php>
- Many of these have connections to IALH and several also include connections with external organizations.
- Steps are being taken to assist UVic health researchers to develop strong external grant funding applications.



UVic Special Advisor of Health,  
Nathan Lachowsky  
Photo: UVic Photo Services

For more information on the UVic Health Initiative and/or the role of the Special Advisor Health Research, contact Nathan at [specialadvisorhealth@uvic.ca](mailto:specialadvisorhealth@uvic.ca).

## IALH Acting Director, Damien Contandriopoulos



We welcome Damien Contandriopoulos as the Institute on Aging & Lifelong Health’s Acting Director while Director Scott Hofer is on study leave from July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

Damien is a full professor in the UVic School of Nursing. His main areas of research focus on the analysis of health policy-making processes, the use of evidence in decision-making and the analysis of highly performing models of healthcare delivery. Between 2014 and 2019 he held one of Canada’s 14 CIHR Applied Public Health Research chairs. For six years (2012-2018), Damien also led the knowledge translation platform in Quebec’s provincial nursing intervention network.

Damien can be reached at [IALHDirector@uvic.ca](mailto:IALHDirector@uvic.ca) or 250-721-6350.



# Upcoming Events

## 2022 55+ BC Games Victoria September 13-17, 2022

The 55+ BC Games is a multi-activity event which: a) provides an opportunity for individuals 55 years of age and older to participate in a range of physical and social activities; b) promotes community awareness of the 55+ population as physically active and socially engaged; and c) encourages year round participation in physical and social activities. Host communities choose a minimum of 20 activities from a master list of approved activities and sports (which includes badminton, cycling, dragon boating, ice curling, pickleball and swimming). Some sports are more physically active than others, and modifications exist in some sports to allow for greater participation. The sport package for the Victoria games will be available towards the end of 2021. For more information, to participate, or to volunteer, go to <https://55plusbcgames.org/> and <https://55plusbcgames.org/zones/zone1/?date1=2021>

# Research Opportunity



### iCare Project

**Are you interested in  
how technology can help  
you manage chronic conditions?**

- Are you eligible?**
- Age 65 years or older
  - 2 or more chronic health conditions (e.g. high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease)
  - You own a smartphone and have wifi available

- What you would be asked to do:**
- Use iHealth technologies and Amazon Echo Show for 2 months
  - Complete 45 min. pre and post surveys
  - Track use in daily journal
  - Participate in 15 minute exit interview

Technologies, training and support provided

**FOR MORE INFO:**  
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