Wysa's AI Platform Backed by Innovate UK Funding - For Young Adult Mental Health Support During Covid-19

Monday 6 July, 2020

Wysa is pleased to announce that in response to the Covid-19 crisis, we have received funding from Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency, to support schools in providing mental health support using its award-winning AI platform, to young people aged 13-18.

Wysa is one of the companies chosen from over 8,000 applicants to receive funding, made available to innovative projects to meet issues caused by lockdown restrictions as a result of the global pandemic.

Young Minds recently found that 83% of young people polled thought their mental health had worsened during Covid. In some cases, waiting times for therapy support for children waiting to access the CAMHS service can be as high as twelve months. A 2018 survey found that three-quarters of respondents get worse before they are able to access treatment.

"Wysa applied for funding to address growing concerns over a 'tsunami of mental health' that is continuing to swell in our adolescent population. Mental health in children was already a rising concern prior to the pandemic. Since then school closures, uncertainty, isolation, fear for loved ones and restriction of access to support have come together to form a perfect storm." said Emma Selby, Wysa's UK lead.

"We're delighted that Innovate UK, the UK's innovation agency has chosen Wysa as an innovator for AI in Mental Health. AI in healthcare is a focus area for innovation in the UK, and we see this funding as helping us build upon Wysa's leadership in this area to enhance mental health services within the UK through an AI-enabled approach." continued Selby.

Innovate UK, as part of UK Research and Innovation has invested £20 million in innovation projects to support responses to the COVID crisis. The aim of this competition was to support UK businesses to focus on emerging or increasing needs of society and industries during and following the Covid-19 pandemic. By fast-tracking innovation, the UK will be better placed to maintain employment levels, a competitive position in global markets, and make the UK more resilient to similar disruption.

With the funding provided by Innovate UK, Wysa will be able to offer a population-level preventative program to young people across the country until September 2020. This includes free access to bespoke adolescent-focused mental health support modules of our award-winning app, with support strategies and exercises written by clinical experts. Using Wysa's award-winning, unique combination of AI chat, digital self-help and human support users will get a space to just talk, access to 100+ self-management techniques, and support from Wysa's trained mental health coaches. Users can 'chat' with their friendly penguin friend on the Wysa app, who makes recommendations of exercises to do and going through them together. The Wysa app also checks in daily to see how you're doing, and can signpost to further support if needed.

"We hope that during a time when school counsellors are less accessible and stress and tensions are high, Wysa can be here to support our young people. The project will also provide us with an anonymised insight into how the pandemic has affected younger people's mental health through our in-built use of outcome measures. This is information that could change the way we respond to future global crises, and we look forward to publishing the results at the end of this year." Selby concluded.

Access to the app will be promoted through secondary schools across the country. We invite any secondary schools that would like to get involved to email our project lead Emma Selby on emma@wysa.ai.

About Wysa

Wysa is an AI-based 'emotionally intelligent' chat platform, which combines AI chat and digital self-help with expert human support to its users directly as well as enable insurers, healthcare providers, employers offer large-scale self-management of mental wellness to their members, patients, and employees and a customisable care pathway to more advanced support. With 2 million users across more than 30 countries, Wysa is the top-rated app in the NHS and by ORCHA for stress and anxiety, and also ORCHA's top app to manage anxiety and support self-care during COVID-19. Wysa responds to

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the emotions that users express and uses evidence-based cognitive-behavioural techniques (CBT), DBT, meditation, breathing, yoga, motivational interviewing and micro-actions to help build mental resilience skills and feel better. For more information, see https://www.wysa.io

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About Innovate UK

Innovate UK drives productivity and economic growth by supporting businesses to develop and realise the potential of new ideas. We connect businesses to the partners, customers and investors that can help them turn ideas into commercially successful products and services and business growth. We fund business and research collaborations to accelerate innovation and drive businessinvestmentintoR&D. Oursupportisavailabletobusinessesacrossall economic sectors, value chains and UK regions.

Innovate UK is part of UK Research and Innovation. **For more information visit www.innovateuk.ukri.org**

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