YPMH joins Wellcome-supported Mental Health Catalyst to accelerate new and better interventions for depressed mood

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The William Templeton Foundation for Young People's Mental Health (YPMH) is delighted to be participating in the Mental Health Catalyst, a major Wellcome-supported initiative led by the University of Cambridge's Institute for Manufacturing (IfM) through its knowledge transfer company, IfM Engage.

The Mental Health Catalyst has been established to accelerate the identification, development and uptake of new and better interventions for people experiencing conditions associated with clinically significant depressed mood.

For YPMH, this is an important step in our mission to help turn research into practical solutions that can prevent and reduce mental ill health, improve outcomes and help more people get better and stay well.

Turning research into practical impact

Clinically depressed mood imposes profound costs on individuals, families, societies and economies. It disrupts education, employment, physical health and relationships, contributes to disability and recurrent illness and creates substantial economic losses, while increasing pressure on already overstretched health and social systems.

Scientific understanding of depressed mood has advanced substantially. However, progress in translating that knowledge into interventions that can be developed, adopted and sustained at scale has been uneven and slow.

The Mental Health Catalyst has been designed to address this gap. The current four-year programme, Catalyst 1.0, will apply a structured Understand : Innovate : Implement approach to synthesise evidence, identify high-potential intervention opportunities, understand barriers to innovation and adoption at scale, and create a Mission Map to help align future research, innovation, investment and implementation.

The programme brings together expertise in innovation management, evidence synthesis, lived experience engagement, global mental health and mental health translation.

Building on YPMH's collaboration with IfM and IfM Engage

YPMH's participation in the Catalyst builds on a collaboration with IfM and IfM Engage that began in 2019.

Together, we have worked to apply innovation management, roadmapping, ecosystem mapping and systems approaches to one of the most difficult challenges in mental health: how to translate social, psychological and biological research into practical, scalable interventions.

This collaboration has progressed through several stages.

First, YPMH and the Aviva Foundation co-funded research synthesis work at the IfM, helping to develop a multidisciplinary understanding of depression in young people. This included the publication of Biological, Psychological, and Social Determinants of Depression: A Review of Recent Literature in Brain Sciences in 2021, and the publication of Changing Hearts, Changing Minds earlier that year. This work helped integrate evidence on the interacting biological, psychological and social factors that can contribute to depression, including stress, inflammation, cognitive processes, genetic vulnerability and adverse life circumstances.

The collaboration then moved from understanding to innovation. YPMH and IfM Engage worked with more than 150 stakeholders across the mental health ecosystem to identify vulnerability factors, mechanisms and intervention opportunities across prevention, early detection, diagnosis and treatment. This work led to the publication of Changing Minds, Changing Lives in 2023, setting out longer-term visions for improving young people's mental wellbeing across families, schools, health systems and other contexts.

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Mental Health :: Young People's Mental Health :: Depression ::

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More recently, the collaboration has focused on developing and testing methods to translate research into effective, user-acceptable and scalable interventions. This has included the development of the Understand : Innovate : Implement methodology, piloting the approach in schools and healthcare settings, supporting the development of a mental health strategy for an academy trust of 20 schools and helping to initiate the development of the Mental Health Catalyst.

The Understand : Innovate : Implement methodology is a key foundation for the Catalyst.

A collaborative programme

IfM Engage will lead programme design and delivery, applying structured innovation, roadmapping, ecosystem analysis and strategic prioritisation methods developed through IfM research.

The Cochrane Evidence Synthesis Unit Germany / UK will lead the programme's systematic evidence synthesis and pathway mapping work, integrating evidence across biological, psychological and socio-ecological domains.

Generation Mental Health will support the design and coordination of lived experience engagement, helping to ensure that the perspectives of people affected by depressed mood inform the Catalyst's work.

The Mental Health Innovation Network, hosted by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, will support global stakeholder engagement and dissemination, including engagement across Africa, Asia and Latin America.

YPMH will bring its experience in helping to accelerate the translation of research into practical, scalable interventions to prevent and reduce mental ill health across the life course.

Peter Templeton, Founder of YPMH and Project Director of the Mental Health Catalyst at IfM Engage, said:

"The Mental Health Catalyst represents the kind of work YPMH was created to support: bringing together rigorous evidence, structured innovation and practical implementation to help turn research into solutions that can improve lives. We are delighted to be working with IfM Engage, Cochrane, Generation Mental Health, the Mental Health Innovation Network and Wellcome to help identify and accelerate intervention opportunities with real potential for impact."

Professor Tim Minshall, Chair of YPMH's Board of Trustees, Head of the Institute for Manufacturing and Chair of the Mental Health Catalyst Steering Committee, said: "Since 2019, YPMH, IfM and IfM Engage have worked together to explore how innovation management and systems approaches can help address mental health challenges. The Mental Health Catalyst builds directly on that collaboration and provides a major opportunity to apply these methods at scale, with the aim of accelerating more effective interventions for depressed mood."

Catalyst 1.0 will produce prioritised intervention portfolios, analysis of systemic barriers and enabling solutions, and integrated roadmaps towards better, stakeholder-agreed future states. These outputs will form the basis of the Mental Health Catalyst Mission Map, a strategic framework intended to support coordinated action across research, innovation, policy, funding and implementation communities.

YPMH looks forward to contributing to this important initiative and to working with partners across the mental health ecosystem to help accelerate new and better interventions for depressed mood.

To learn more or explore opportunities to collaborate, please see www.mentalhealthcatalyst.org, or email contact@ypmh.org

Company Contact: