



# *Mental health in the virtual world: what does the future hold for us?*

Tim Greacen  
EPS Maison Blanche



Groupement Hospitalier de Territoire Paris



Psychiatrie et Santé Mentale  
du Nord-Est de Paris

# Mental Health in the Virtual World

- Anonymous access to mental health advice
- A whole new world: new risks, both positive and negative
- New recovery pathways in the virtual world
- No longer myself, but myselfes



# Promoting Mental Health

- Access to information, exploring new worlds
- Not just avoiding illness, but having a good life
- Well-being in the virtual world
- Access to training, lifelong training
- Learning communities online
- Anonymity for delicate subjects

# The virtual world as a risk factor for mental health

- Addictions: from cradle to deathbed
  - impulsive, lack of control, like gambling, can't stop
- Harassment: digital attacks, digital pain
- Facilitated recruitment:
  - community engagement; but also radicalisation
- Myself: multiple virtual world identities
  - no longer '*I have a secret life*' but '*I have 20 secret lives*'
  - having the right me in the right place : *Who am I? Who are we?*



University  
College  
SJÆLLAND



# Mental Health Care and the Virtual World

## *Scenarios for the future of the social in mental health care*

Giacco D, Amering M, Bird V, Craig Y, Ducci G, Gallinat J, Gillard S, Greacen T, Hadridge P, Johnson S, Jovanovic, N, Laugharne R, Morgan C, Muijen M, Schomerus G, Zinkler M, Wessely S, Priebe S.

*Lancet Psychiatry*, 2017 Mar;4(3):257-260



# Online care

- All mental health care, with the potential exception of emergency care, will be provided online



University  
College  
SJÆLLAND



REGION  
SJÆLLAND

*-vi er til for dig*

# All mental health care will be provided by virtual mental health professionals.

- Not a human being, but an avatar with artificial intelligence.
  - reliable
  - equipped with the best information on evidence-based interventions.
  - It would never forget anything you have ever said
  - able to communicate in any style you might prefer.
- You would be able to choose the gender, age, ethnic group, appearance, and other characteristics of the virtual professional.



# On time, always ready

- A mental health professional available whenever you might need him/her
  - Anytime. Night and day.
- Never too busy, never in a hurry
- Always there to listen
- Never late



# Consistent quality improvement

- Software based on the best available mental health-care expertise and evidence
- Software providing data for consistent quality improvement;
  - research focused on quality improvement of software programs using process and outcome data.
- The software developer
  - responsibility for malpractice
  - charge costs for access to clinical services.



University  
College  
SJÆLLAND



# No geographical limit

- available all over the world
- reduced need for professionals for local services
- significant economy in terms of personnel budget.



# Eco-friendly

- You would not need to travel to access mental health care.
- It saves people's time

# Knock knock: this is your drone

- Drones will be used to deliver medications



# Knock knock: this is your psychiatrist

- You could give a physical body to your virtual clinician: a robot, an avatar





# Experimenting different selves with different professionals

- You could present yourself with different characteristics and as different virtual patients to different virtual professionals.



## Workforce economy:

No longer human carers, but human facilitators

- Some people might still want some contact with real human beings to supervise or validate their interactions with their virtual clinicians
- Human facilitators could help you navigate the software.
- However, virtual care would drastically reduce the human workforce required and the need for training in mental health care provision.



# Think about it.

Is the man on stage in front of you right now  
a real man?

Is it really Tim Greacen?

Or is the real Tim back in Paris having a wild time up  
on the Eiffel Tower?