

Canada to digitally track mental health of troops

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The Canadian military will soon start digitally tracking the mental health of its personnel with new software, the defense ministry said Friday, following a string of suicides this year.

Defense medical staff will begin entering data on service members' mental health directly into [electronic health records](#) so that they can be accessed wherever a member of the military is serving.

Dubbed "Mental Health Notes," the initiative is aimed at improving communication among clinicians and [mental health professionals](#), while creating a data base that will enable the armed forces to "better understand the overall burden of mental illness," the ministry said.

The [defense ministry](#) says [mental health](#) care of service members costs \$40 million a year.

The armed forces have also acquired tablet-based software that will allow for "immediate and continuous tracking of progress," the ministry added.

A defense ministry study made public last month found that the suicide rate among Canadian military personnel was lower than that of the general population.

Between 2008 and 2013, suicides by military members or reservists averaged about 17 a year.

But eight suicides were reported between January and March, setting off alarm bells about the rising human and financial costs.

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