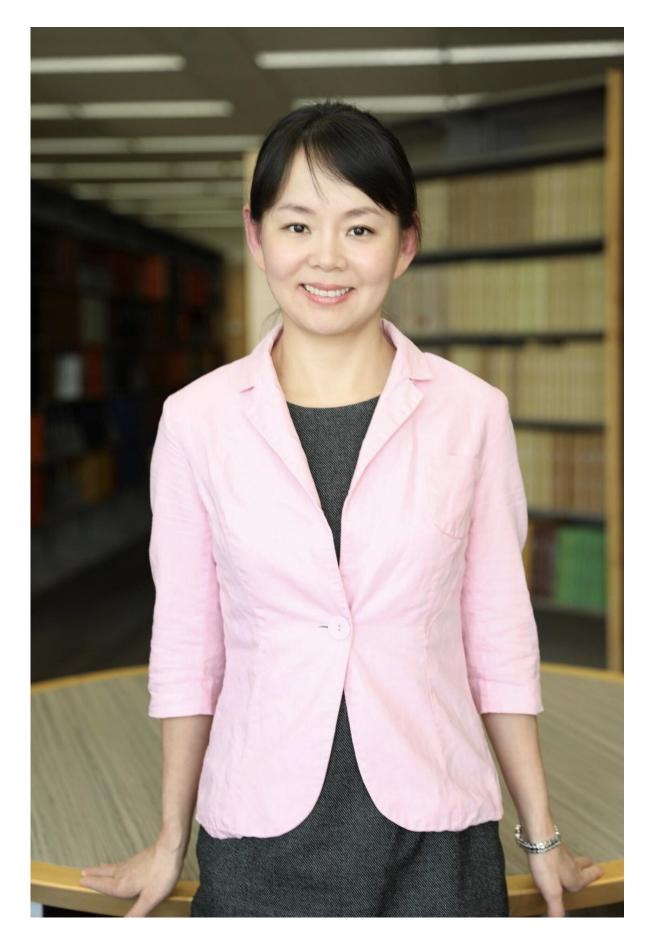


Digital intervention reduces depressive symptoms in people living with HIV

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Dr. Alicia Hong. Credit: George Mason University

Globally more than 36 million people are living with HIV (PLWH), and a third of them have elevated depressive symptoms. Most PLWH live in developing countries with limited access to mental health services due to HIV-related stigma and a shortage of mental health professionals. Widely accessible smart phones offer a promising intervention delivery mode to address this gap.

Dr. Alicia Hong, Professor at George Mason University's College of Health and Human Services and her colleagues in China developed the digital <u>intervention</u> Run4Love on the popular social media app WeChat. They evaluated Run4Love with a <u>randomized controlled trial</u> (RCT) of 300 PLWH with depression in China, published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*.

Run4Love was a multimedia digital program adapted from evidencebased Cognitive Behavioral Stress Management courses. Participants received stress reduction exercises, cognitive therapy, and exercise guidance on WeChat. Their progress was monitored with timely, tailored feedback. The intervention led to a significant reduction in <u>depressive</u> <u>symptoms</u> (0.6 effect size) in 3-, 6- and 9-month follow-ups and reduced stress, suicidal behaviors, and improved quality of life.

"This is one of the first large RCTs with long-term follow-up to evaluate digital interventions in global health settings." Hong explains, "The success of Run4Love suggests an app-based digital intervention is feasible for many PLWH in resource-limited settings."



More information: Yan Guo et al, Effect of a WeChat-Based Intervention (Run4Love) on Depressive Symptoms Among People Living With HIV in China: A Randomized Controlled Trial, *Journal of Medical Internet Research* (2020). DOI: 10.2196/16715

Provided by George Mason University

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