



The tech promising to transform mental healthcare

1 message

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Hello. From [smartphone addiction](#) to social media bullying to chatbot "therapy", we're often told of the risks posed by technology to our mental health. Yet there's growing interest in how innovations like AI and virtual reality (VR) could help treat conditions like depression, anxiety and PTSD. I take a look at new therapies being trialled in the UK. We also bring you news of the children hacking their own schools, Apple's Sim-less iPhone and Britain's spreadsheet champion.

THE DOWNLOAD

The tech tackling depression and anxiety



One solution, from TrendVR, offers immersive therapy in soothing virtual environments. Credit: TrendVR

Could AI and VR become key weapons in the fight against serious mental health conditions? The UK government seems to think so.

This week it announced it would spend £3.6m to help 17 start-ups build and test therapies based on so-called extended reality (XR), including virtual and augmented solutions. It says it's seeking ways to cut costs in its **stretched public healthcare system**, as the number of people asking for help with mental health issues has soared since before the pandemic.

Among the initiatives are AI and augmented reality-powered smart glasses that promise to combat memory loss in people with severe depression, anxiety or psychosis. There's a "customisable virtual coach" for individuals struggling with substance abuse, therapeutic AI filter apps, and immersive cognitive behavioural therapy courses delivered via Meta Quest 2 headsets.

It's early days for these innovations, but Britain is already successfully deploying apps, XR, **chatbots** and wearables in its mental health services, says Dr Cynthia Bullock from Innovate UK, the agency overseeing the trials. She believes these tools are a "win-win", offering patients more choice while making the system sustainable for the future.

But there are hurdles to overcome before we see wider adoption. Studies suggest that while mental health clinicians think AI and VR therapies show promise, they worry about issues like data protection and potential side effects. More training and education is needed to build trust, the researchers conclude.

Clinical solutions must also meet a higher regulatory bar than commercially available mental wellbeing apps, while also showing they offer value for money. But

the approval process can be lengthy and change won't happen overnight.

The download: *It seems inevitable technology will play a greater role in mental healthcare provision, with potentially powerful results - just don't expect quick fixes.*

TOP STORIES



Will the latest iPhone kill off the Sim card?

The iPhone Air will only operate with an eSim - which allows users to switch networks or plans without resorting to a fiddly fork to open a tiny Sim card tray.

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Children hacking their own schools 'for fun'

More than half of UK school and college cyber attacks are being carried out by their own pupils, the country's data watchdog says.

[Here's why >](#)



Meta 'covered up potential harms to children'

Two whistleblowers allege the tech giant hid potential risks from its virtual reality products, but Meta called the claims "nonsense".

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Oracle boss briefly becomes world's richest

Larry Ellison's wealth surged to \$393bn (£290bn) on Wednesday, surpassing Elon Musk's \$385bn, after his technology firm forecast surprisingly strong growth.

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Expect nuclear fusion by 2030, says US energy chief

US Energy Secretary Chris Wright tells the BBC nuclear fusion will soon power the world and rapidly help bring down carbon emissions.

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SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Is AI stealing publishers' web traffic?



Google rolled out its AI Overviews last year. Credit: BBC

Newspaper owners and media publishers have already seen much of their advertising revenue siphoned off by social media. But now they face a new threat - from the AI summaries that appear at the top of the Google results page. Instead of clicking through to a story, readers may be happy with the AI Overview, and that's threatening a valuable source of web traffic, they say. But Google argues it is **still sending billions of clicks to websites every day.**

VIDEO PICK



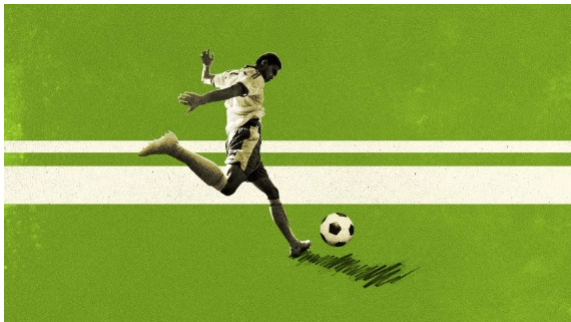
Space-based solar power?

Tech Now reporter **Nick Kwek** learns how beaming clean power from huge solar panels in space down to Earth could help solve our energy challenges.

[Watch here](#)

And finally...

Spreadsheet champion. Who knew using spreadsheets could be a sport? The BBC has been speaking to Ha Dang who won the British leg of the Microsoft Excel World Championship last week, where contestants undertook timed tasks ranging from advanced formulas to data modeling. Dang, who only discovered the sport in February, said he was already "passionate" about it. **[Find out how he prepared for the UK contest.](#)**



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