Institute for Technology in Psychiatry launches at McLean Hospital

McLean Hospital recently announced the launch of the Institute for Technology in Psychiatry, which will provide services to researchers and clinicians to conduct technology-based or digital mental health projects.

Justin Baker, MD, PhD, director of functional neuroimaging and bioinformatics within the Schizophrenia and Bipolar Disorder Program at McLean Hospital, will serve as the scientific director of the institute.

“There is a profound need for leadership in the emerging area of technology-based tools in psychiatry, with huge potential benefits for the field and for our patients,” Baker said in a press release. “The path forward is exciting but complex. It is important that we proceed thoughtfully, focusing on how technology can help address existing real-world problems for our patients and providers, and invest in the long-term vision for how these technologies could and hopefully will change our field for the better.”

Scott L. Rauch, MD, president and psychiatrist-in-chief at McLean Hospital, will chair the steering committee of the Institute for Technology in Psychiatry.

Through a network of partnerships with academic and industry groups in the data science and engineering fields, the institute will streamline the process of accessing novel approaches from the technology sector for local groups and help them apply these approaches while protecting patient privacy.

Activities at the institute will be divided between research and clinical care. Research will focus on new ways to quantify behavior using new technologies such as smartphones and webcams.

Researchers also aim to develop standardized strategies for assessing and tracking patients that can be used across a variety of research protocols.

From a clinical standpoint, the institute will focus on use of digital tools, such as web-based therapy, telecommunications and smartphone apps, to deliver care and monitor treatment response.

“Innovators from other disciplines and the private sector need clinical partners in mental health to understand what works and what doesn’t,” Baker said in the release. “The goal is to ensure that new approaches are being tested in ways that are grounded in real-world mental health treatment settings.”