



## NEWS RELEASE

### Mental health tool Big White Wall® available free across Ontario

Online support community helps with depression and anxiety

TORONTO, Oct. 4, 2018 – On the occasion of Mental Illness Awareness Week (Oct. 1-7), the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) is pleased to share that Big White Wall®, a 24/7 monitored online peer support community for people struggling with depression and anxiety, is now available free to all Ontarians. Big White Wall is available to those ages 16+ without a referral by going directly to [bigwhitewall.ca](http://bigwhitewall.ca).

People who use Big White Wall can connect with other members around specific topics. They can also take advantage of guided support courses on topics such as depression, anxiety, weight management, and smoking cessation. In addition, there is an opportunity to display feelings using images, drawings, and words to make bricks that are posted to the Wall. The service is staffed round the clock by trained Wall Guides who make sure that the community is safe and supportive.

“On Big White Wall I was able to connect with people, completely anonymously, monitored and safely, who were sharing my concerns,” says Jane, a Big White Wall user from Oshawa, ON. “Family and friends can burn out. There’s only so much they can take listening to anxiety, listening to your worries, feeling down. Big White Wall can do all these things and it doesn’t burn out.”

“We know that stigma and limited access to mental health resources makes getting support difficult,” says Harriet Ekperigin, Senior Business Lead, Mental Health, OTN. “This tool is available to everyone, night or day, no matter where they live in Ontario. What’s great about this is we’re bringing the support directly to the people who need it, when they need it.”

“Big White Wall can be a tremendously useful option for people struggling with anxiety and depression, youth in particular, while waiting for in-person support or as a stand-alone tool for those seeking a supportive community,” says Dr. Ed Brown, CEO, OTN. “This is an exciting first for Ontarians to have direct access to this type of impactful tool at no cost.”

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Big White Wall has been active in several other countries, including the United Kingdom (supported by Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex), the United States, and New Zealand. Since its inception in 2007, this online tool has been used by more than 76,000 people. Big White Wall has also won numerous awards in Europe including finalist in innovation mental health and best European Union eHealth solution 2014.

The availability of Big White Wall in Ontario is being promoted by way of a campaign, a key part of which is a video that [can be viewed and shared here](#).

### **About OTN**

OTN brings virtual care innovation to the healthcare system so that the people of Ontario can get the care they need when and where they need it most: at home, in their community or in hospital. For more than a decade, OTN has increased access to health care and education across the province with one of the world's most extensive telemedicine networks. Working with its many partners and leveraging its unique knowledge of health care and digital technology, OTN addresses challenges by introducing and spreading new ways of delivering care that benefit patients, care providers and the healthcare system. An independent, not-for-profit organization, OTN is funded by the Government of Ontario. For more information please visit [www.otn.ca](http://www.otn.ca).

To arrange an interview with Dr. Brown or Harriet Ekperigin, please contact Gillian Wansbrough, 416-312-3779, or [gwansbrough@otn.ca](mailto:gwansbrough@otn.ca).