Aaron Lin

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MindMeld: Phase 1

Mental health and illness is a significant public health challenge, yet access to free or affordable mental health support and medication remains a persistent issue. High costs, long waiting times, and limited available resources create barriers that prevent people from receiving the care they require. Mental health conditions, such as anxiety and depression, require ongoing support through therapy, and medication, but many people struggle to navigate through the healthcare system to acquire these kinds of help. Less than one-third of the U.S. population lives in an area with an adequate number of mental health professionals available to meet the needs of the population, with most states having less than forty percent of the professionals needed. Other barriers to treatment include cost, and a lack of insurance, as around twenty percent of people with mental health issues and disorders are uninsured.

While accessibility to mental health services and aid is the issue, some existing systems offer solutions that can be expanded upon or integrated into a better approach to this problem. Government programs and non-profit organizations offer crisis hotlines and support groups, providing immediate assistance to those who need it. Telehealth platforms allow people with mental issues to receive help without needing to show up for in-person visits, allowing people farther away to get the help they need. But these systems come with varying limitations, such as restricted availability, underfunding, and long waiting times. By retaining the positive features of these existing services, a solution can be designed, in which all these services are integrated into one centralized system, in junction with existing data on mental health, allowing this digital platform to inform people of all the free and affordable options to them. It will utilize the user's location, in addition to their medical needs and other filters such as insurance and financial status, to find suitable aid for them. There will also be features for online therapy and ways to receive affordable medication.