



PRESS RELEASE

YOU-AR-OK: Canada's newest quarantine buddy

EDMONTON, June 2, 2020 – A new augmented reality solution will soon be available to Canadians. Hoffmann-La Roche Limited (Roche Canada) has awarded funding to My Viva Inc., the University of Alberta's Rehabilitation Robotics Laboratory (Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine) and ELIXR Simulations to jointly develop the YOU-AR-OK avatar, a virtual health application to support users with their health and wellbeing during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis.

According to recent Ipsos research, a majority of Canadians (56%) say COVID-19 is impacting their mental health and less than half (42%) of them are seeking treatment. YOU-AR-OK provides users with an evidence-based journaling approach to promote mental health, nutrition and physical wellness using AR-guided interaction and encouragement.

Out of the more than 800 applications Roche Canada received through its COVID-19 Open Innovation Challenge, YOU-AR-OK was among the 11 projects awarded funding. In times of social-distancing, the YOU-AR-OK app will act as a friendly 'self-help' quarantine buddy to engage and guide users with specific steps for improving their mental health based on professional clinician input. The app's release is planned for late summer 2020 and will be offered free to Canadians through the app store.

"YOU-AR-OK helps Canadians focus on improving their mental health, nutrition and physical health, including those with chronic health conditions. My Viva Inc. aims to contribute to expanding capacity to deliver health care virtually, including projects to reach vulnerable Canadians. These critical virtual support programs will assist in easing the burden on our already strained health care system."

- Loreen Wales, Chief Executive Officer, My Viva Inc.

"Our objective is to reach as many Canadians as we can to assist them in getting engaged in their health even when there are many competing priorities. The power of self-care on mental and physical health is often taken for granted and it feels like a burden to do especially when stress levels are high. YOU-AR-OK is an innovative and interactive approach to get Canadians involved in doing their daily journaling and reflecting using an augmented reality 'buddy' to guide users through their wellness journey."

- Martin Ferguson-Pell, Professor, Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine at University of Alberta

"Roche Canada developed this innovation challenge because we believe that it will take minds from many different sectors and industries to come together and solve the issues we face because of the pandemic. The impact of isolation, physical distancing and other stressors is expected to be profound and we think the YOU-AR-OK project can make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Canadians. We look forward to championing this important work."

- Mike Duong, Head of Personalized Health Care, Roche Canada

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About My Viva Inc.

Through individualized health plans based on specific needs, through a virtual health platform called [My Viva Plan](#), My Viva Inc. offers stress management techniques including mindfulness and meditation practice, maintaining a healthy diet in self-isolation, and strategies on how to keep active at home. The health programs are designed and maintained by healthcare professionals through the virtual platform, including physicians, researchers, psychologists, dietitians, diabetic educators, kinesiologists, exercise physiologists, among others.

About Roche

Roche is a global pioneer in pharmaceuticals and diagnostics focused on advancing science to improve people's lives. The combined strengths of pharmaceuticals and diagnostics under one roof, combined with a focus on innovation, have made Roche the leader in personalized healthcare – a strategy that aims to provide patients with timely access to their best possible healthcare solution.

Roche is the world's largest biotech company, with truly differentiated medicines in oncology, immunology, infectious diseases, ophthalmology and diseases of the central nervous system. Roche is also the world leader in in vitro diagnostics and tissue-based cancer diagnostics, and a frontrunner in diabetes management.

Founded in 1931, Roche Canada is committed to searching for better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases while making a sustainable contribution to society. The company employs more than 1,200 people across the country through its Pharmaceuticals division in Mississauga, Ontario and Diagnostics, as well as Diabetes Care divisions in Laval, Quebec.

Roche aims to improve patient access to medical innovations by working with all relevant stakeholders. Roche Canada is actively involved in local communities through its charitable giving and partnerships with organizations and healthcare institutions that work together to improve the quality of life of Canadians. For more information, please visit www.RocheCanada.com.

About ELIXR Simulations

ELIXR (Enhanced Learning Incorporating Extended Reality) Simulations is a non-profit organization, born from the University of Alberta's Rehabilitation Robotics Lab, aimed at improving the human condition. ELIXR is focused on using virtual reality technology and simulations to drive forward the way we interact, learn and communicate. ELIXR Simulations achieves this by creating a pipeline of XR content and talent to the market.

About University of Alberta Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine's Rehabilitation Robotics Laboratory

The Rehabilitation Robotics Lab (RRL) is an inter-disciplinary research lab focused on improving quality of life through robotics and technology. RRL's research focuses on wheelchair biomechanics, new technologies to assess spinal structure and function, assistive robotics, and virtual reality in rehabilitation medicine. The focus of the RRL has always been to provide a "sandbox" environment for research and development related to the biomechanics of human functioning through simulation and the implementation of extended reality (XR) technologies.

Related Links:

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