



PRESS RELEASE

YOU-AR-OK is a virtual reality app to boost the mental health and wellness of Canadians

EDMONTON, November 2, 2020 – My Viva Inc. has launched YOU-AR-OK, a mental health app featuring an avatar puppy dog, called Yaro, to help Canadians struggling with mental health challenges associated with COVID-19.

YOU-AR-OK will support the health and wellbeing of Canadians during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis. This ground-breaking new app is designed to help Canadians get engaged in managing their mental health through daily reflecting and journaling. During our beta testing phase, **My Viva Inc. is excited to offer the app for FREE to all Canadians. Click [here](#) to download the app.**

According to a recent [Leger poll](#) released on October 20, 24 per cent of Canadians reported their mental health and stress levels are currently worse compared to during the first wave of the pandemic. In a recent Statistics Canada survey, 70 per cent of Canadians said they were concerned about maintaining social ties. In a May 2020 [Ipsos poll](#), most Canadians (56 per cent) said COVID-19 impacted their mental health, and less than half (42 per cent) sought treatment. In this challenging and unprecedented time, YOU-AR-OK provides users with an evidence-based journaling approach to promote mental health and physical wellness using virtual-guided interaction and encouragement.

In April 2020, My Viva Inc. was awarded funding from Hoffmann-La Roche Limited (Roche Canada) to develop the app with partners at the University of Alberta's Rehabilitation Robotics Laboratory (Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine) and ELIXR Simulations. Out of the more than 800 applications submitted to Roche Canada's *COVID-19 Open Innovation Challenge*, YOU-AR-OK was among the 11 projects awarded funding. In times of physical distancing and social isolation, Yaro is a friendly 'self-help' wellness companion to engage and guide Canadians with specific steps for improving mental health based on professional clinician input.

"YOU-AR-OK promotes journaling and reflection by interacting verbally with the avatar to support Canadians focus on improving their mental health and physical health, including those with chronic health conditions. My Viva Inc. aims to expand 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 the public to promote getting engaged in their health 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 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 it will take minds from many different sectors and industries to solve the issues we face because of the pandemic. The impact of isolation, physical distancing, and other stressors are expected to be profound. We think the YOU-AR-OK project can make a positive impact on Canadians' health and wellbeing. 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.

Using a virtual health platform called [My Viva Plan](#), My Viva Inc. offers individualized health plans based on specific needs that provide its clients with various stress management techniques. This includes 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 supported 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, and 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 Canadians' quality of life. 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, to improve 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 the University of Alberta Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine's Rehabilitation Robotics Laboratory

The Rehabilitation Robotics Lab (RRL) is an interdisciplinary 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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