

# NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

## Medical technologies evaluation programme

### Equality impact assessment: Topic selection and scoping

### GID-HTE10016 Virtual reality for treating agoraphobia and agoraphobic avoidance: early value assessment

The impact on equality has been assessed during this evaluation according to the principles of the [NICE Equality scheme](#).

1. Have any potential equality issues been identified during the development of the topic briefing note or during selection, and, if so, what are they?

Several potential equality issues have been identified in line with equality considerations for this class of technologies. Key issues include:

- Some VR technologies need Wi-Fi to use the intervention or to upload content. Additional support and resources may be needed for people who are unfamiliar with digital technologies or do not have access to the internet.
- People with visual or cognitive impairment, problems with manual dexterity, a learning disability or who have difficulty reading or understanding health-related information may need additional support to use VR. This should be considered when selecting and delivering these interventions. Further considerations can be found in [NICE's guideline on mental health problems in people with learning disabilities](#).
- VR may not be suitable for use by people with photosensitive epilepsy; significant visual, auditory, or balance impairment; organic mental disorder; primary diagnosis of alcohol or substance disorder or personality disorder; significant learning disability; or active suicidal plans. Some VR interventions may involve moving around the room or standing. This may be difficult for some people with physical disabilities or additional accessibility needs.
- People with English as a second language may have difficulties navigating VR provided in English. Developers of VR technologies and mental health services should consider how to translate these interventions or provide additional support as needed.

- People's views of mental health problems or interventions may be influenced by their ethnic, religious and cultural background. People have the right to make informed decisions about their care, including the use of VR. Healthcare professionals should discuss the language and cultural content of VR with patients before use.

People facing social inequality and disadvantage, discrimination and social exclusion are at higher risk of mental health problems. Agoraphobia and agoraphobic avoidance can significantly affect people's daily living. Under the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on their ability to do typical day-to-day activities. Age, disability, race and religion or belief are protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010).

**2.** What is the preliminary view as to what extent these potential equality issues need addressing by the committee?

The committee should consider all the equality issues when making recommendations. Access to mental health care may not be improved for those who are unable to engage with a digital intervention due to a lack of accessibility, unavailability of internet connection, lack of experience with digital technologies or lack of space or privacy needed to complete the intervention.

**3.** Has any change to the draft scope been agreed to highlight potential equality issues?

No.

**4.** Have any additional stakeholders related to potential equality issues been identified during the scoping process, and, if so, have changes to the stakeholder list been made?

No.

**Approved by Associate Director:** Anastasia Chalkidou

**Date:** 23/03/2023