

## FEELINGBETTERNOW® PROFILE

*Prepared for Dr. Sam Ozersky*

Psychiatric help dispensed from your Blackberry? It's could be the therapeutic direction of the future. In fact, help with mental health problems is already available on your computer, thanks to the innovative work of a group of leading North American mental health care specialists led by eminent Toronto psychiatrist Dr. Sam Ozersky, an expert in occupational psychiatry.

Together, they have developed a web based program, called FeelingBetterNow®. It's an extraordinary concept which is about to revolutionize how mental health problems are diagnosed and treated – and it's easily accessible and inexpensive. Mental health problems, now at an all time high, largely go untreated; and for this we pay a huge price – as individuals, as businesses and as a society.

### **Why Mental Health Problems Are So Prevalent**

Mental health issues are an inevitable consequence of our relentless 24/7 culture. There is never enough time. We multi-task. We work shifts that are out of whack with our natural rhythms. We short change ourselves on sleep. We eat on the run. We stew in traffic, chase never-ending deadlines and work punishing hours. We feel that our lives are out of control. It is no wonder that our psyches rebel. Or collapse under the stress.

### **Who is Affected**

One in five of us in Canada suffers from a mental disorder such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, panic attacks or bipolar disorder. We all know someone – a friend, family member or co-worker. It's our biggest single health care issue. These are chronic illnesses and without treatment they do not get better. Yet only a tiny fraction – one in eight – receives the right diagnosis and treatment. Why? There are three basic reasons: stigma, cost and time.

## Why Diagnosis and Treatment Are Hard to Access

- *Stigma*: People conceal or deny the problem. Employee Assistance Programs are not equipped to treat serious problems and employees are concerned about confidentiality. Also, EPA programs keep records and this makes many people uncomfortable. So they don't ask for help.
- *Cost*: Therapists are expensive.
- *Time*: Most family doctors, who are usually the "gatekeepers" to the provision of mental health care, do not have time, in the typical 10 to 15 minute slot allocated to each patient, to piece together the information they need to diagnose a mental health problem. And the real issue can be obscured because patients often describe physical symptoms so that is what the doctor focuses on. The result? The patient remains undiagnosed – or misdiagnosed – and untreated. And the condition gets worse.

## The Costs

Few diseases affect as many people and as many companies as mental health issues. Disability claims for mental health problems cost Canadian companies billions of dollars each year. They cost the health care system billions of dollars as well. The toll in human cost is incalculable: loss of jobs, careers, relationships and personal well being.

## A Revolutionary Solution

This is where FeelingBetterNow® promises a bright future in the treatment of mental health disorders. Dr. Ozersky and his team have collaborated on a solution that is in effect the "magic bullet" to the discovery and treatment of the major mental health problems that plague us today.

The FeelingBetterNow® website fast- tracks the diagnosis and treatment process by enabling a person to come up with a preliminary diagnosis as well as treatment options. It costs the user nothing and is paid for by employers who sign up for the service – between \$3.00 to \$6.00 for each person using it.

## How FeelingBetterNow® Works

Users log on to the site using a nickname so total confidentiality is ensured. They then anonymously fill out a detailed questionnaire that can help diagnose and recommend treatment for nine major mental disorders. The answers to the questionnaire are processed by the web-based software program that generates a diagnostic “risk map” and a corresponding “care map” that outlines treatment options that the user can discuss with their doctor. Disorders like depression can be pinpointed in minutes. The site also provides a follow-up map that helps the doctor and patient chart progress and make necessary adjustments.

Launched in January 2006 it's the first medically based website in the world. It ensures that patients participate in their own care which helps patient compliance – while at the same time, acting as an education tool for the doctors.

Business and industry, the health care community and insurers are extremely excited about the tremendous potential for greatly improved mental health care that saves both time and money.

## Why it Works

It works because it's in sync with the times. The computer screen is replacing the diagnostic couch as more and more people turn to the internet to find answers for their health problems. It's a major shift in health care in general says Dr. Oszerksy. And it has great potential for remote communities where health care is difficult to access.

It also shows promise for insular communities such as the military. “Who is going to trust a commander who gets panic attacks,” says Dr. Ozersky. “Where is he/she going to get discreet help?”

## Who Uses It

Corporate clients to date include TD Bank, Dofasco, B.C. Provincial Health Services Association, Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan, Essex Primary Trust in the U.K. as well as health authorities and insurers, professional associations, PHARMA and military and veterans groups in Canada and the U.S. The service is available to corporations and other groups or associations who subscribe to the web program.

## Who Is Behind It

Mensante Corporation was founded in 2002 by a group of top North American psychiatrists, psychologists, family physicians and health economists from prestigious universities such as Harvard, McGill, McMaster, University of Toronto, Pennsylvania University and YUC San Diego. Dr. Ozerksy is president and CEO.

For his prescient work Dr. Ozerksy was named Physician of the Year in 2008 by the Canadian Institute of Healthcare Information, presented by the Canadian Medical Association. He is Senior Consultant at the Toronto Hospital Mood Disorders Clinic.

FeelingBetterNow® is the only web based health program to be endorsed by the Canadian College of Family Physicians.

## What the Future Holds

In 2009 IDC, a leading international research firm, named Mensante one of the Top 10 Healthcare companies to watch. Dr. Ozerky's goal is to make the website part of the primary health care system in the U.S. and in Britain. It would cost Canadian users less than a dollar per person per year. "We have enough antidepressants," says Dr. Ozersky; we have enough psychotherapists. What we need is effective deployment to the people who need it.

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