

UW-Madison researchers exploring mental health applications for AI

Posted on Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Researchers at UW-Madison are exploring the use of artificial intelligence to support mental health with \$3 million in federal grants.

Funding for the two-year research project comes from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, according to a release from the university. Scientists working in UW-Madison's Center for Healthy Minds are developing a system that would deliver personalized mental health support using a mobile device like a smartphone.

Christy Wilson-Mendenhall, co-investigator for the study, says scientists "hope to discover how to offer supportive well-being practices on mobile phones that are sensitive to what a person is feeling and easy to engage with in the moment."

In the initial phase of the project, researchers will conduct "experience sampling" with human participants through an app, combining prompts to gauge their emotional state with geolocation and other activity data.

According to the university, this process will support the creation of machine learning tools and algorithms to be used in the new platform being developed.

Richard Davidson is the founder of the Center for Healthy Minds and a professor of psychology and psychiatry at UW-Madison. He says the information that will be gathered in this phase could provide "informative context for tailoring delivery of specific micro-supports" for boosting mental health.

"There are rich streams of data that can be acquired through low-effort activities that individuals are accustomed to doing on mobile phones like creating a short video, and also completely passively from their phones, with their consent," Davidson said in the release.

Later in this effort, researchers hope to conduct a control trial to test these "micro-supports" triggered with machine learning tools, and ultimately launch a platform

that could be accessed through web, mobile and wearable technology.

See more on the study here:

<https://www.wisbusiness.com/2023/university-of-wisconsin-madison-artificial-intelligence-and-well-being/>

-By Alex Moe