

# A MOBILE MENTAL HEALTH APPLICATION (NESTT™) LEADS TO A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN TRAUMA SYMPTOMS AND AN INCREASE IN COPING SKILL USE.

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## Abstract

### Background:

Millions of individuals seek refuge across the world to escape persecution in their country of origin. Many refugees and survivors of torture and trauma continue to struggle with symptoms of chronic traumatic stress and the persistence of sequelae from prior traumatic events coupled with daily post-migration stressors. Many individuals meet DSM 5 or ICD 11 criteria for PTSD and comorbid conditions including depression, anxiety, and somatic concerns. However, barriers to accessing evidence-based treatments such as: (1) language (limited English proficiency/costly interpreters); (2) travel (limited transportation to treatment); (3) financial (unaffordable healthcare and associated interpreter costs); and (4) cultural (cultural perceptions of mental health/illness) preclude many individuals from receiving the assistance they need. Increasingly utilized treatments delivered via mobile devices help to overcome these barriers through the use of intuitive graphical interfaces that eliminate the need for language-based instruction.

### Methodology:

A pilot study assessing the effectiveness of a novel mHealth toolkit (NESTT) was conducted in a sample of adult re-settled refugee men and women (N=20). Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to compare pre/post-intervention levels of trauma related psychosocial distress on the Refugee Health Screener (RHS-15) and coping using an investigator generated coping measure.

### Results:

Results indicated that our culturally responsive mHealth toolkit significantly ( $p < .001$ ) reduced symptoms related to traumatic stress, anxiety, depression and somatic complaints in addition to increased the use of coping skills.

### Conclusion:

Results support the use of mHealth technology as one of the tools to address impairing symptomatology related to traumatic stress and associated impairment.

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