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Funding worth Â£5.3 M for digital mental health intervention for adolescent girls in India

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Wellcome has awarded £5.3 million to Bengaluru-based Wysa to fund a scale-up study that will adapt a clinically validated digital mental health intervention for adolescent girls living in rural India, a population facing some of the most significant mental health inequalities globally.

The funding will support research led by Wysa, whose digital mental health interventions have been studied in peer-reviewed research and deployed across public health systems and healthcare programmes internationally. Working with academic and community partners in the UK and India, the project will adapt an evidence-based intervention to address anxiety and depression among adolescent girls.

India is home to more than 253 million adolescents, the largest adolescent population in the world. Around half of all mental health conditions begin before the age of 14, and suicide is now among the leading causes of death for young people in the country. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable, experiencing higher rates of anxiety and depression alongside barriers such as limited autonomy, restricted access to technology, lower literacy, stigma, and family gatekeeping.

The study will first identify the cultural and contextual barriers that limit adolescent girls' ability to access mental health support. These insights will then be used to adapt Wysa's intervention so that its method of delivery and content reflects the lived realities of girls and their communities. The study will then evaluate the efficacy of the adapted intervention and its successful delivery in real world low-to-middle-income contexts.

"This funding allows us to go far beyond simple translation," said Chaitali Sinha, Chief Clinical R&D Officer at Wysa. "By working closely with academic and community partners, we aim to co-design a digital intervention that is not only clinically effective, but genuinely usable and relevant for adolescent girls living in rural India."