University of Victoria

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BACKGROUNDER

The Partners

CanAssist is a University of Victoria organization dedicated to improving the quality of life and promoting the independence of those with disabilities. It focuses on developing practical, customized technologies that are not commercially available and innovative programs that address unmet community needs. CanAssist harnesses the ingenuity of faculty, students and staff from virtually every discipline at UVic, as well as volunteers in the community. It is unique in North America. For more information, visit www.canassist.ca.

Tyze Personal Networks is a technology-enabled service that creates personal, private and secure online networks to help friends, family and neighbours connect and collaborate with individuals who are vulnerable to isolation. Tyze users include: adult children caring for their aging parents; people with acute, chronic or mental illness; families supporting a member with a disability; and individuals facing a life challenge. For more information, visit www.tyze.com.

The PLAN Institute for Caring Citizenship provides training, consultation and research related to family leadership, social network development, caring citizenship and social innovation to a wide variety of groups and organizations. Its mission is to reduce the isolation of people living at the margins of society and to ensure the contributions of all community members are welcomed. For more information, visit www.planinstitute.ca.

Connect for Care Project

The challenge: The health needs of BC's vulnerable populations—the frail, elderly and people with chronic conditions including mild and moderate dementia—are currently served by different health-care providers in a variety of settings including home, hospital, doctors' offices, supportive housing and residential care. There is a need for better coordination of these services and to strengthen personal support networks, particularly in rural and remote regions.

The project: Funded by $3 million from the BC government, this two-year partnership among CanAssist, Tyze and the PLAN Institute will create a suite of customized online tools to build personal support networks among health-care providers, clients, their families and others. These online tools will include video chat features, mobile collaboration tools, and secure systems for sharing personal and health care files. They will also support the integration of third-party software.

The goal: To improve the delivery of sustainable patient-centred care; reduce stresses for individuals, their families and other caregivers; improve communication among all stakeholders; and evaluate the health outcomes on patients and the economic impact of the technology on BC's health care system.

Canfitt (CanAssist: Facilitating Independence Through Technology) Project

The challenge: Studies have shown that when people with disabilities are provided with off-the-shelf assistive technologies, everyone benefits—the patient, the caregivers and the health-care system. But what are the benefits of customized assistive technologies? How effectively can they enhance patient independence and streamline health-care delivery?

The project: Funded by $500,000 from the BC government, this partnership between CanAssist and the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) will provide customized technologies to selected clients with significant physical and cognitive disabilities, including those who are supported by the organization, Choice in Supports for Independent Living (CSIL). The technologies developed and delivered will be designed to increase independence in daily living and/or reduce requirements for one-on-one support from caregivers.

The goal: To determine whether access to one or more customized assistive technologies can improve client outcomes and reduce health-care service needs; and to assess the benefits of expanding the program to other regions in BC.

For more information on CanAssist, visit www.canassist.ca

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