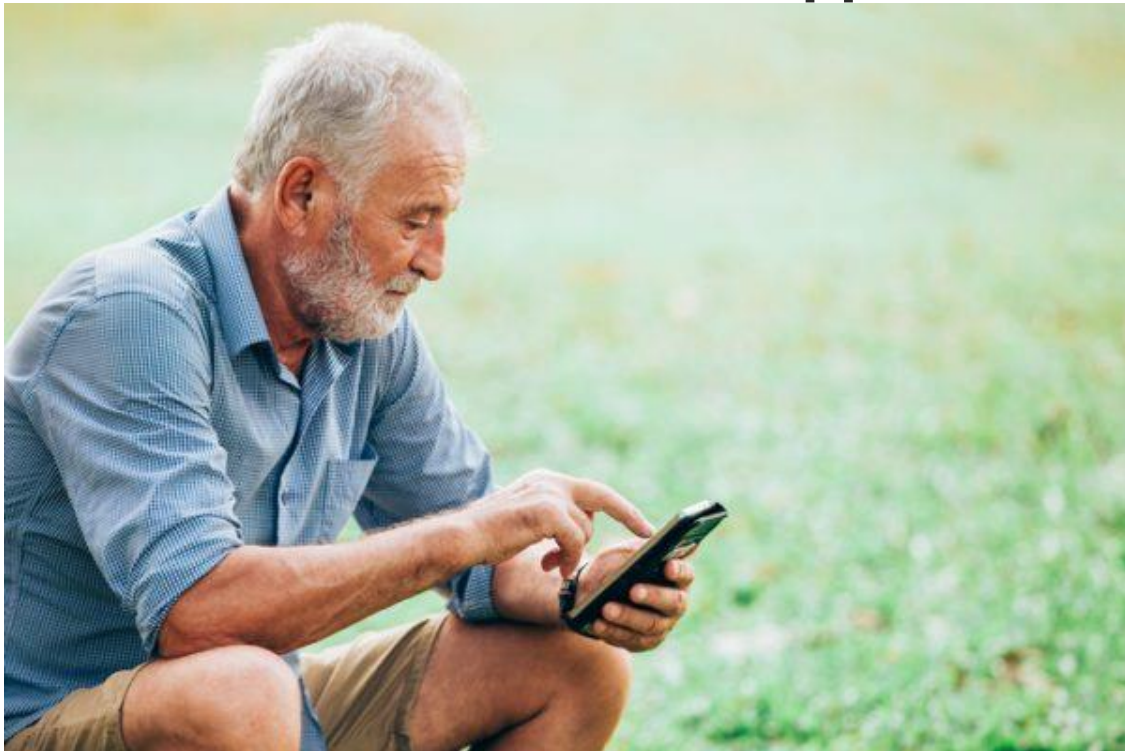


MedCity News

Startup Launches to Provide Geriatric Behavioral Health Support



Vitalic provides mental health support to older adults. It connects them to a care team that includes geriatric boarded psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, licensed therapists and mental health support coaches.

Marissa Plescia, December 20, 2024

About [25% of adults](#) over the age of 65 battle mental health challenges, including depression and anxiety, and [63% do not receive](#) adequate care.

A new startup aims to move the needle on this stat. [Vitalic](#), a geriatric behavioral health platform, has launched with \$4 million in seed funding, it shared with MedCity News exclusively. The startup was born out of innovation company Redesign Health and payer/provider VNS Health, both of which contributed to the seed funding.

Vitalic, based in Boston, works with payers and identifies high-cost, polychronic members with mental health conditions. It then contacts the members to engage them into an eight to 12-week model with Vitalic. Patients are connected to a team that includes geriatric boarded psychiatrists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, licensed therapists and mental health support coaches. Patients receive telehealth sessions via Zoom, direct messaging with their care team and personalized mood assessments.

“We’re a senior-specialized behavioral health solution designed specifically to proactively engage this polychronic, aging adult population, who, by the way, are not typically seeking out behavioral health on their own,” said Ben Gardner, CEO and co-founder of Vitalic, in an interview.

Vitalic is entering the market with VNS Health to engage its older members in mental health support.

“This partnership is very important to us because we have a big gap with our membership and their ability to deal effectively with their mental health challenges that keep them from really living the way that they could. ... Our members are at the high end of multiple chronic illnesses and all kinds of other challenges,” said Dan Savitt, president and CEO of VNS Health, in an interview. “Right now, our focus as an organization is, how do we engage people?”

The \$4 million in seed funding from Redesign and VNS Health will support Vitalic in three ways, according to Gardner. It is trying to prove out its outcomes, work with additional partners beyond VNS (including Medicare Advantage plans and risk-based entities), and create a replicable model.

There are many mental health companies that exist today — including Headspace, Lyra Health and Spring Health — but there are very few that specialize in older adults. One is Author Health, but this company is more focused on serious mental illness while Vitalic is focused on mild to moderate mental illness, Gardner said.

However, additional support is needed for seniors, as older adults with untreated mental health issues incur [more than three times](#) the costs of those without mental health challenges. In addition, the number of Americans aged 65 and older is [expected to rise](#) from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million in 2050.

“We’re dealing with a growing cohort of the population,” Gardner said. “This is the highest chronicity cohort of any age group in the country. ... We’re focused on this growing issue. What we’re trying to really focus on is being informed about seniors specifically and what is needed there, really getting the superpower around outreach and engagement of this population.”

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