# Implementing Digital Navigational Tools in the Mental Healthcare System

Emilie Desnoyers[1], Andrew Greenshaw[1], Osmar Zaiane[2], Ken Porter[3]

1. University of Alberta, Department of Psychiatry; 2. University of Alberta, Department of Computing Science; 3. Mood Disorder Society of Canada

Try MIRA and fill out our survey!

## Introduction

- The mental healthcare system is very fragmented and there are many barriers present when trying to access serivices.
- This leaves us with the question: where do you go for mental health resources?

- Navigational supports are emerging as critical in helping people find the right care at the right time.
- Digital mental health tools are reshaping access to care by reducing barriers and stigma while offering support that is convenient, on-demand, and responsive to diverse needs.
- MIRA, a virtual assistant developed by the Mood Disorder Society of Canada and the University of Alberta, is one of the first digital navigational tools in Canada.
- MIRA does not provide treatment; instead, it connects individuals to appropriate services across the mental healthcare system. Free, bilingual (English and French), and powered by machine learning, MIRA improves user experience while safeguarding privacy.

## Resource Library and Usage Metrics

- MIRA recommends pre-vetted resources from our resource library.
- Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the current utilization patterns of MIRA during the month of May 2026.

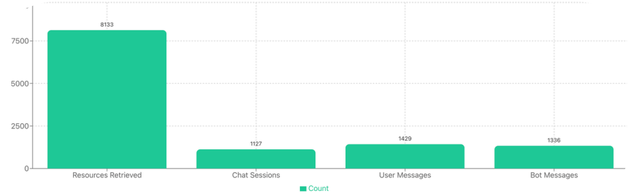



Figure 1: demonstrates a substantial level of system activity, showing that approximately 8,000 resources were retrieved and roughly 1,400 messages were exchanged over the course of the month.

- The resource library is community-driven—submissions from users, volunteers, and developers are reviewed by an expert advisory committee to ensure accuracy and relevance.

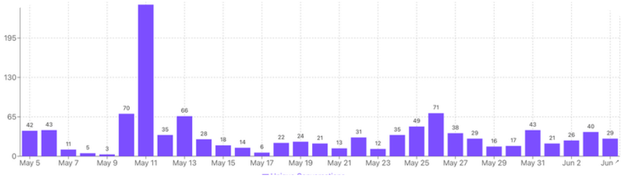
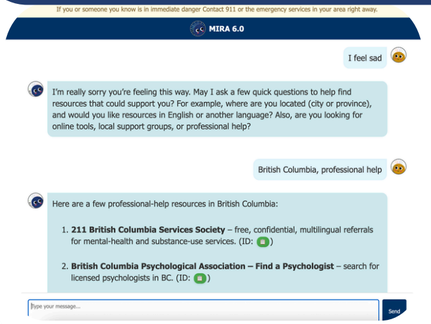



Figure 2: The data indicate consistent daily engagement, with approximately 20 users accessing the platform on an average day throughout the reporting period.

## Conversation Flow




- Following a brief interaction with MIRA, users are presented with a set of recommended resources that are generated based on the topics and needs identified during the conversation.

## Impact

- Navigational interventions have been associated with reduced symptom severity and improved quality of life .
- Digital navigation tools may further support equity by lowering informational barriers and offering consistent guidance across geographic and socioeconomic contexts. However, these benefits are contingent on careful governance, transparent evaluation, and sustained engagement with users and providers.