

A Proposed Framework for Designing Trials Evaluating the Effectiveness and Implementation of Digital Interventions for Substance Use

Theresa E. Matson, Eric D.A. Hermes, Aaron R. Lyon, Andrew Quanbeck, Stephen M. Schueller, Sadie M. Wilson, Joseph E. Glass

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Eric D.A. Hermes



Andrew Quanbeck



Sadie M. Wilson



Aaron R. Lyons



Stephen M. Schueller

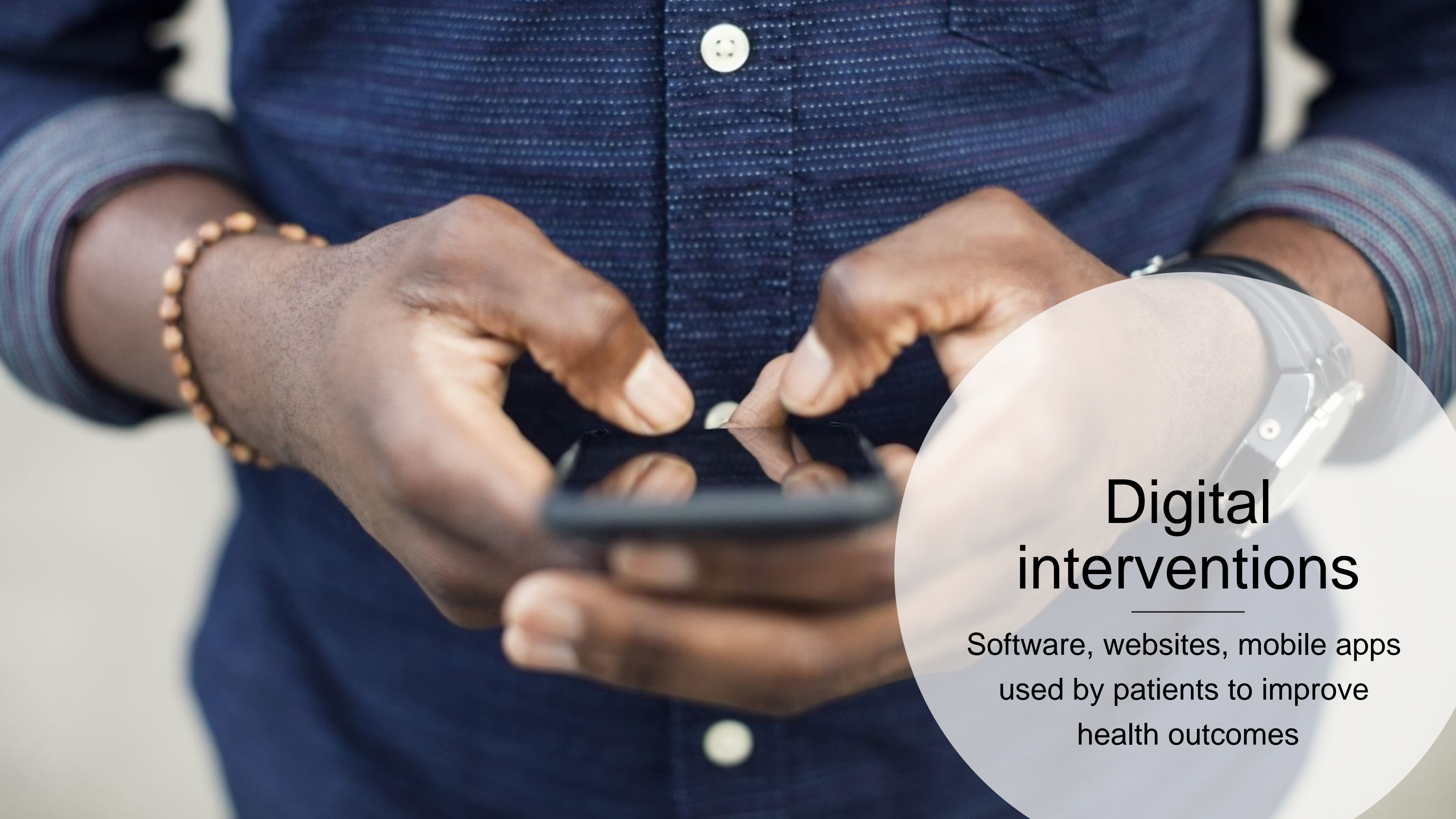


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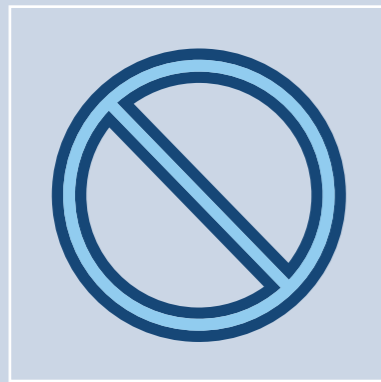
Digital interventions

Software, websites, mobile apps
used by patients to improve
health outcomes

Digital interventions for substance use



Used for screening, brief intervention, or to deliver evidence-based treatment



Potential to address barriers and bottlenecks to substance use treatment



Evidence of efficacy but mixed evidence of effectiveness **under** real-world **conditions**

**Effectiveness of digital interventions in real-world settings
may depend on its implementation**

Implementation Challenges

Digital interventions have unique implementation considerations that may not fit traditional care pathways



Technology infrastructure



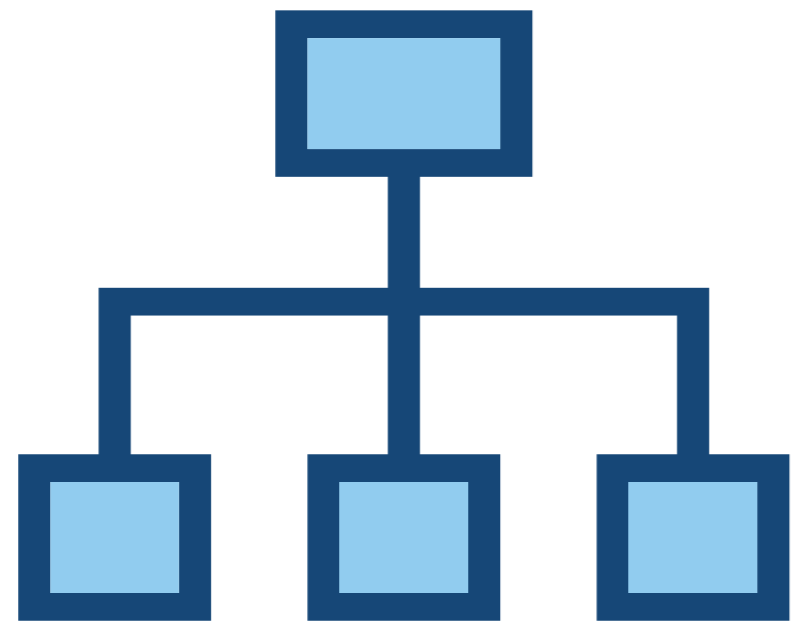
Digital literacy



Monitoring and follow-up

Studies on delivery of digital interventions in clinical care

Clinical Workflows



Clinicians provide introduction, setup and follow-up
(Glass et al., 2021, 2022)

Staffing models



- Clinical technology specialists
(Ben-Zeev, 2015)
- Peer specialists
(Fortuna et al, 2019)
- Health coaches
(Glass et al., 2023; Park et al., 2022)

Specialized Clinics



Digital clinics
(Rodriguez-Vila et al., 2020)

Implementation strategy studies

- Map implementation strategies to digital intervention barriers (Graham et al., 2020)

Implementation Strategies for Digital Mental Health Interventions in Health Care Settings

Andrea K. Graham^{1,*}, Emily G. Lattie¹, Byron J. Powell², Aaron R. Lyon³, Justin D. Smith⁴, Stephen M. Schueller^{1,5}, Nicole A. Stadnick^{6,7}, C. Hendricks Brown⁴, David C. Mohr¹

¹Center for Behavioral Intervention Technologies, Northwestern University

²Brown School, Washington University in St. Louis

³University of Washington

⁴Center for Prevention Implementation Methodology, Northwestern University

⁵University of California, Irvine

⁶University of California, San Diego, Department of Psychiatry

⁷Child and Adolescent Services Research Center

Abstract

U.S. health care systems are tasked with alleviating the burden of mental health, but are frequently under-prepared and lack workforce and resource capacity to deliver services to all in need. Digital mental health interventions (DMHIs) can increase access to evidence-based mental health care. However, DMHIs commonly do not fit into the day-to-day activities of the people who engage with them, resulting in a research-to-practice gap for DMHI implementation. For health care settings, differences between digital and traditional mental health services make alignment and integration challenging. Specialized attention is needed to improve the implementation of DMHIs in health care settings so that these services yield high uptake, engagement, and sustainment. The purpose of this paper is to enhance efforts to integrate DMHIs in health care settings by proposing implementation strategies, selected and operationalized based on the discrete strategies established in the Expert Recommendations for Implementing Change project, that align to DMHI-specific barriers in these settings. Guidance is offered in how these strategies can be applied to DMHI implementation across four phases commonly distinguished in implementation science using the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, Sustainment Framework. Next steps to advance research in this area and improve the research-to-practice gap for implementing DMHIs are recommended. Applying implementation strategies to DMHI implementation will enable psychologists to systematically evaluate this process, which can yield an enhanced understanding of the factors that facilitate implementation success and improve the translation of DMHIs from controlled trials to real-world settings.

Few trials testing new delivery approaches

STUDY PROTOCOL **Open Access**

Study protocol for a factorial-randomized controlled trial evaluating costs, effectiveness of therapeutics for substance use in primary care (DI)

Joseph E. Glass^{1*}, Caitlin N. Dorsey¹, Tara Deborah King¹, Jessica Mogk¹, Kelsey Stefa Rosemarie Thomas⁵, Angela Garza McWeth

JMIR RESEARCH PROTOCOLS Park et al

Protocol

Testing an mHealth System for Individuals With Mild to Moderate Alcohol Use Disorders: Protocol for a Type 1 Hybrid Effectiveness-Implementation Trial

Linda S Park¹, MSW, PhD; Ming-Yuan Chih², MHA, PhD; Christine Stephenson³, PhD; Nicholas Schumacher¹, MS; Randall Brown¹, MD, PhD; David Gustafson⁴, PhD; Bruce Barrett¹, MD, PhD; Andrew Quanbeck¹, PhD

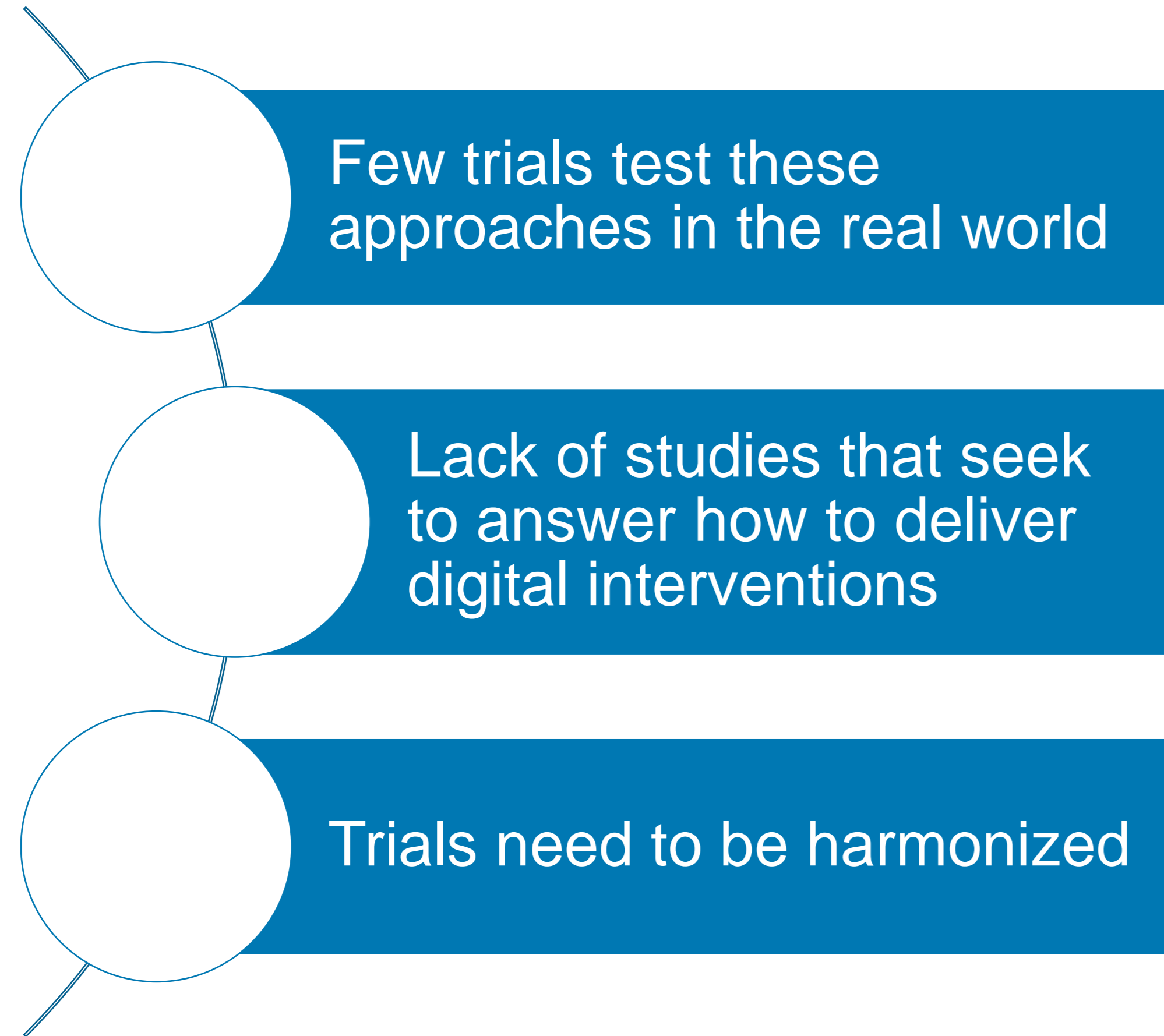
¹Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, School of Medicine and Public Health, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI, United States

²Department of Health and Clinical Sciences, College of Health Sciences, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, United States

³Center for Health Disparities Research, School of Medicine and Public Health, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI, United States

⁴Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI, United States

Motivation for this framework



We propose a framework for designing trials that seek to address questions about the implementation and effectiveness of digital interventions in real-world care

Methods

- Draws on literature from trial design, expert perspectives, lessons learned

ANNALS OF HSR

Effectiveness-implementation Hybrid Designs

Combining Elements of Clinical Effectiveness and Implementation Research to Enhance Public Health Impact

Geoffrey M. Curran, PhD,* Mark Bauer, MD,† Brian Mittman, PhD,‡
Jeffrey M. Pyne, MD,* and Cheryl Stetler, PhD‡

Objectives: This study proposes methods for blending design components of clinical effectiveness and implementation research. Such blending can provide benefits over pursuing these lines of research independently; for example, more rapid translational gains, more effective implementation strategies, and more useful information for decision makers. This study proposes a “hybrid effectiveness-implementation” typology, describes a rationale for their use, outlines the design decisions that must be faced, and provides several real-world examples.

Results: An effectiveness-implementation hybrid design is one that takes a dual focus a priori in assessing clinical effectiveness and implementation. We propose 3 hybrid types: (1) testing effects of a clinical intervention on relevant outcomes while observing and gathering information on implementation; (2) dual testing of clinical and implementation interventions/strategies; and (3) testing of an implementation strategy while observing and gathering information on the clinical intervention’s impact on relevant outcomes.

Conclusions: The hybrid typology proposed herein must be considered a construct still in evolution. Although traditional clinical effectiveness and implementation trials are likely to remain the most common approach to moving a clinical intervention through from efficacy research to public health impact, judicious use of the proposed hybrid designs could speed the translation of research findings into routine practice.

Key Words: diffusion of innovation, implementation science, clinical trials, pragmatic designs
(*Med Care* 2012;50: 217–226)

From the *Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, and Department of Psychiatry, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, AR; †VA Boston Healthcare System, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA; and ‡Center for Implementation Practice and Research Support (CIPRS), VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, Los Angeles, CA. Supported by a research grant for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Health Services Research and Development Service: MNT-05-152 (Pyne, PI) and also funded by a research grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse: K01 DA15102 (Curran, PI).
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Reprints: Geoffrey M. Curran, PhD, Department of Psychiatry, Division of Health Services Research, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, 4301 W. Markham St. #755, Little Rock, AR 72205. E-mail: currango@uams.edu.
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DEFINING TERMINOLOGY

Terminology in this study has been informed by a glossary provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (VA QUERI)²²:

www.lww-medicalcare.com | 217

Viewpoint

Measuring the Implementation of Behavioral Intervention Technologies: Recharacterization of Established Outcomes

Eric DA Hermes^{1,2}, MD; Aaron R Lyon³, PhD; Stephen M Schueller⁴, PhD; Joseph E Glass⁵, PhD, MSW

¹Veterans Affairs Connecticut Healthcare System, West Haven, CT, United States
²Department of Psychiatry, Yale University School of Medicine, New Haven, CT, United States
³Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, WA, United States
⁴Department of Psychological Science, University of California at Irvine, Irvine, CA, United States
⁵Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute, Seattle, WA, United States

Corresponding Author:
Eric DA Hermes, MD
Veterans Affairs Connecticut Healthcare System
950 Campbell Avenue
West Haven, CT, 06516
United States
Phone: 1 203 932 5711
Email: eric.hermes@yale.edu

Abstract

Behavioral intervention technologies (BITs) are websites, software, mobile apps, and sensors designed to help users address or change behaviors, cognitions, and emotional states. BITs have the potential to transform health care delivery, and early research has produced promising findings of efficacy. BITs also favor new models of health care delivery and provide novel data sources for measurement. However, there are few examples of successful BIT implementation and a lack of consensus on as well as inadequate descriptions of BIT implementation measurement. The aim of this viewpoint paper is to provide an overview and characterization of implementation outcomes for the study of BIT use in routine practice settings. Eight outcomes for the evaluation of implementation have been previously described: acceptability, adoption, appropriateness, feasibility, fidelity, implementation cost, penetration, and sustainability. In a proposed recharacterization of these outcomes with respect to BIT implementation, definitions are clarified, expansions to the level of analysis are identified, and unique measurement characteristics are discussed. Differences between BIT development and implementation, an increased focus on consumer-level outcomes, the expansion of providers who support BIT use, and the blending of BITs with traditional health care services are specifically discussed. BITs have the potential to transform health care delivery. Realizing this potential, however, will hinge on high-quality research that consistently and accurately measures how well such technologies have been integrated into health services. This overview and characterization of implementation outcomes support BIT research by identifying and proposing solutions for key theoretical and practical measurement challenges.

(*J Med Internet Res* 2019;21(1):e11752) doi: [10.2196/11752](https://doi.org/10.2196/11752)

KEYWORDS
mobile applications; behavior therapy; technology; internet; telemedicine; diffusion of innovation; translational medical research; outcome assessment (health care); review; implementation; behavioral intervention technology

Introduction

Behavioral Intervention Technology

A broad range of health information technologies are increasingly used in the delivery of health care to expand access, increase the effectiveness of care, and improve the productivity of health systems [1,2]. This article focuses on a subset of health information technology developed to intervene in a wide range of behavioral, psychosocial, or chronic health conditions, termed *behavioral health* conditions, by assisting the user to change behaviors, cognitions, and emotional states [3]. The term behavioral intervention technology (BIT) is used to refer to these interventions, although alternative terms such as eHealth, mobile health, *digital treatments*, and *internet interventions* are also used [4].

BITs are interventions delivered over computer software, internet websites, mobile apps, and wearable devices [2]. Such programs present material in varied formats, including audio,


www.jmir.org/2019/1/e11752/

J Med Internet Res 2019 | vol. 21 | iss. 1 | e11752 | p. 1
(page number not for citation purposes)

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DOI 10.1186/s12911-016-0365-5

BMC Medical Informatics and
Decision Making

RESEARCH ARTICLE Open Access



Implementing an mHealth system for substance use disorders in primary care: a mixed methods study of clinicians’ initial expectations and first year experiences

Marie-Louise Mares^{1*}, David H. Gustafson², Joseph E. Glass³, Andrew Quanbeck², Helene McDowell¹, Fiona McTavish², Amy K. Atwood³, Lisa A. Marsch⁴, Chantelle Thomas⁵, Dhavan Shah⁶, Randall Brown⁷, Andrew Isham², Mary Jane Nealon⁸ and Victoria Ward⁹

Abstract

Background: Millions of Americans need but don't receive treatment for substance use, and evidence suggests that addiction-focused interventions on smart phones could support their recovery. There is little research on implementation of addiction-related interventions in primary care, particularly in Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) that provide primary care to underserved populations. We used mixed methods to examine three FQHCs' implementation of Seva, a smart-phone app that offers patients online support/discussion, health-tracking, and tools for coping with cravings, and offers clinicians information about patients' health tracking and relapses. We examined (a) clinicians' initial perspectives about implementing Seva, and (b) the first year of implementation at Site 1.

Methods: Prior to staggered implementation at three FQHCs (Midwest city in WI vs. rural town in MT vs. metropolitan NY), interviews, meetings, and focus groups were conducted with 53 clinicians to identify core themes of initial expectations about implementation. One year into implementation at Site 1, clinicians there were re-interviewed. Their reports were supplemented by quantitative data on clinician and patient use of Seva.


Results: Clinicians anticipated that Seva could help patients and make behavioral health appointments more efficient, but they were skeptical that physicians would engage with Seva (given high caseloads), and they were uncertain whether patients would use Seva. They were concerned about legal obligations for monitoring patients' interactions online, including possible "cries for help" or inappropriate interactions. One year later at Site 1, behavioral health care providers, rather than physicians, had incorporated Seva into patient care, primarily by discussing it during appointments. Given workflow/load concerns, only a few key clinicians monitored health tracking/relapses and prompted outreach when needed; two researchers monitored the discussion board and alerted the clinic as needed. Clinician turnover/leave complicated this approach. Contrary to clinicians' initial concerns, patients showed sustained, mutually supportive use of Seva, with few instances of misuse.

Conclusions: Results suggest the value of (a) focusing implementation on behavioral health care providers rather than physicians, (b) assigning a few individuals (not necessarily clinicians) to monitor health tracking, relapses, and the discussion board, (c) anticipating turnover/leave and having designated replacements. Patients showed sustained, positive use of Seva.

Trial registration: ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT01963234).

Keywords: Addiction, Behavioral health care, mHealth, Primary care

* Correspondence: mares@wisc.edu
¹Department of Communication Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706, USA
Full list of author information is available at the end of the article

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Methods

- Draws on literature from trial design, expert perspectives, lessons learned
- We apply this framework to a working example

DIGITS Trial: Optimizing the implementation of digital therapeutics for substance use disorders in primary care

Interventions

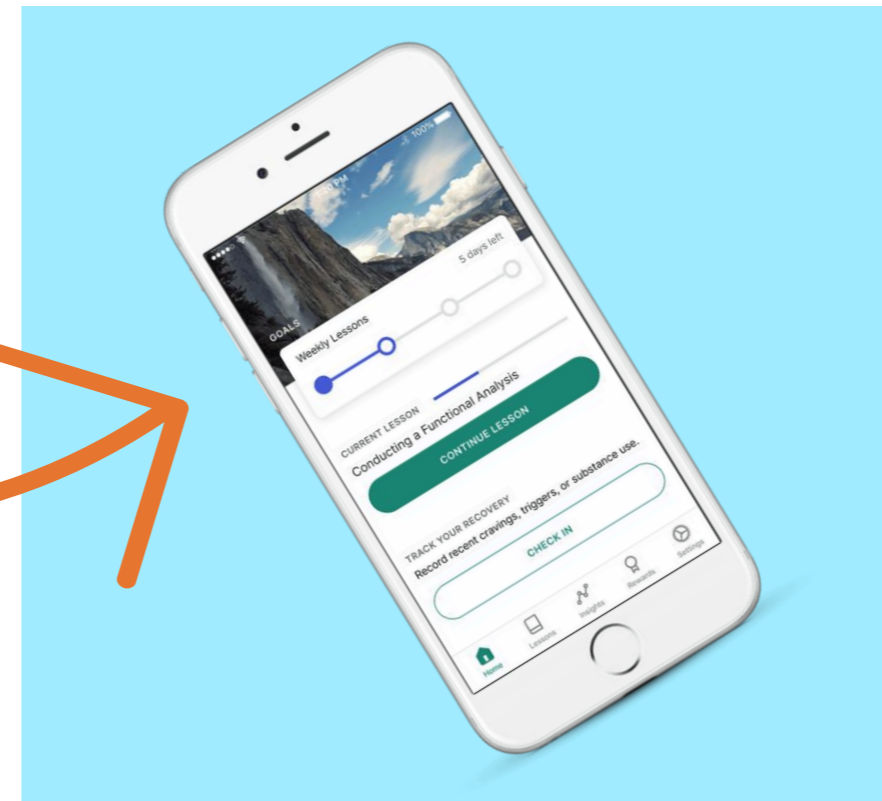
- reSET® and reSET-O®
- Practice facilitation
- Health coaching

Comparator: Standard Implementation

Population: Primary care patients with substance use disorder

Outcomes: Reach, fidelity, cost effectiveness

Timeline: 1-year active implementation and 1 year sustainment



STUDY PROTOCOL

Open Access

Study protocol for a factorial-randomized controlled trial evaluating the implementation, costs, effectiveness, and sustainment of digital therapeutics for substance use disorder in primary care (DIGITS Trial)



Joseph E. Glass^{1*}, Caitlin N. Dorsey¹, Tara Beatty¹, Jennifer F. Bobb¹, Edwin S. Wong^{2,3}, Lorella Palazzo¹, Deborah King¹, Jessica Mogk¹, Kelsey Stefanik-Guizlo¹, Abisola Idu¹, Dustin Key¹, John C. Fortney^{3,4}, Rosemarie Thomas⁵, Angela Garza McWethy⁵, Ryan M. Caldeiro⁵ and Katharine A. Bradley¹

Abstract

Background Experts recommend that treatment for substance use disorder (SUD) be integrated into primary care. The Digital Therapeutics for Opioids and Other SUD (DIGITS) Trial tests strategies for implementing reSET® and reSET-O®, which are prescription digital therapeutics for SUD and opioid use disorder, respectively, that include the community reinforcement approach, contingency management, and fluency training to reinforce concept mastery. This purpose of this trial is to test whether two implementation strategies improve implementation success (Aim 1) and achieve better population-level cost effectiveness (Aim 2) over a standard implementation approach.

Methods/Design The DIGITS Trial is a hybrid type III cluster-randomized trial. It examines outcomes of implementation strategies, rather than studying clinical outcomes of a digital therapeutic. It includes 22 primary care clinics from a healthcare system in Washington State and patients with unhealthy substance use who visit clinics during an active implementation period (up to one year). Primary care clinics implemented reSET and reSET-O using a multifaceted implementation strategy previously used by clinical leaders to roll-out smartphone apps ("standard implementation" including discrete strategies such as clinician training, electronic health record tools). Clinics were randomized as 21 sites in a 2x2 factorial design to receive up to two added implementation strategies: (1) practice facilitation, and/or (2) health coaching. Outcome data are derived from electronic health records and logs of digital therapeutic usage. Aim 1's primary outcomes include reach of the digital therapeutics to patients and fidelity of patients' use of the digital therapeutics to clinical recommendations. Substance use and engagement in SUD care are additional outcomes. In Aim 2, population-level cost effectiveness analysis will inform the economic benefit of the implementation strategies compared to standard implementation. Implementation is monitored using formative evaluation, and sustainment will be studied for up to one year using qualitative and quantitative research methods.

*Correspondence:

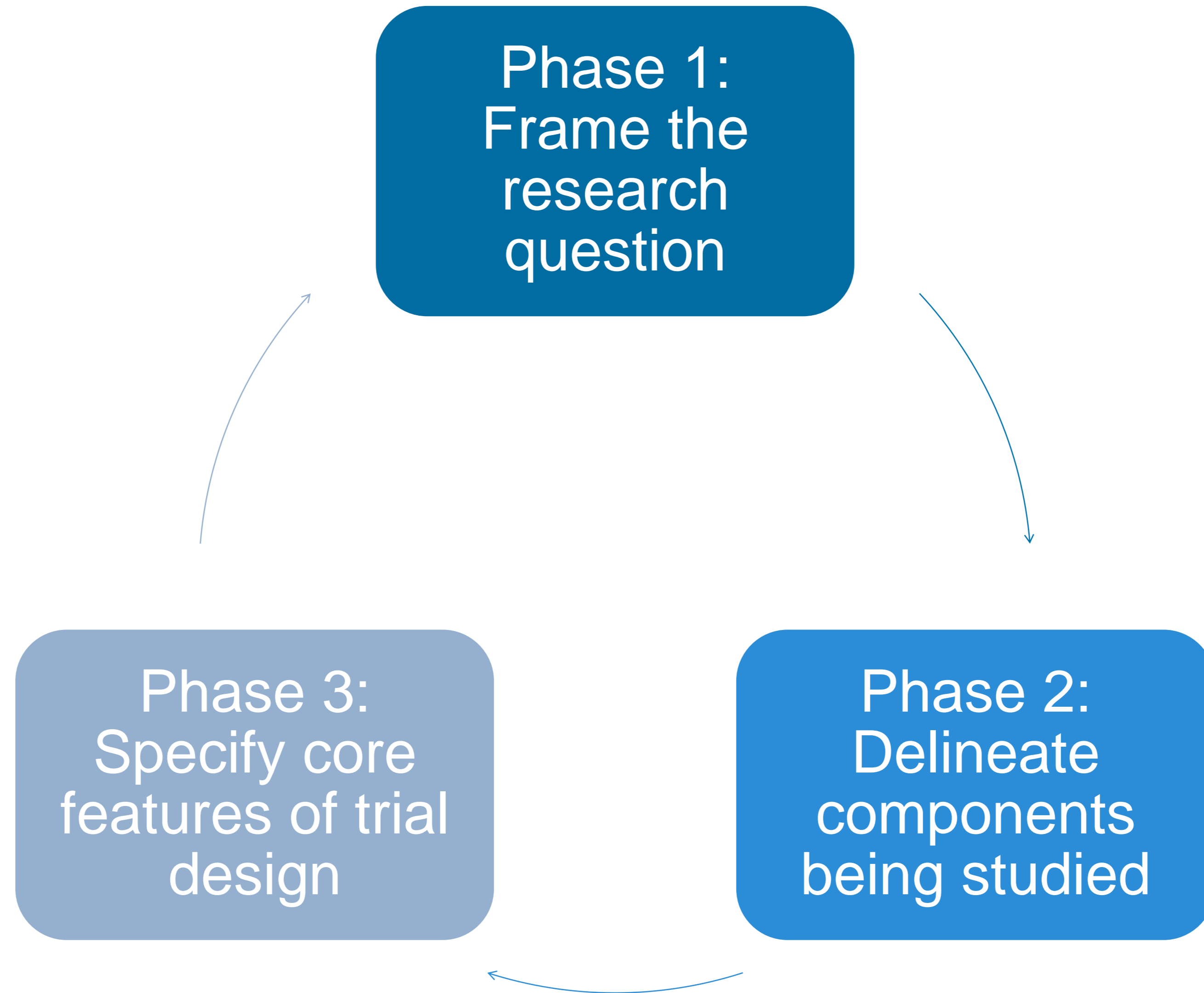
Joseph E. Glass
Joseph.E.Glass@kp.org

Full list of author information is available at the end of the article



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Framework



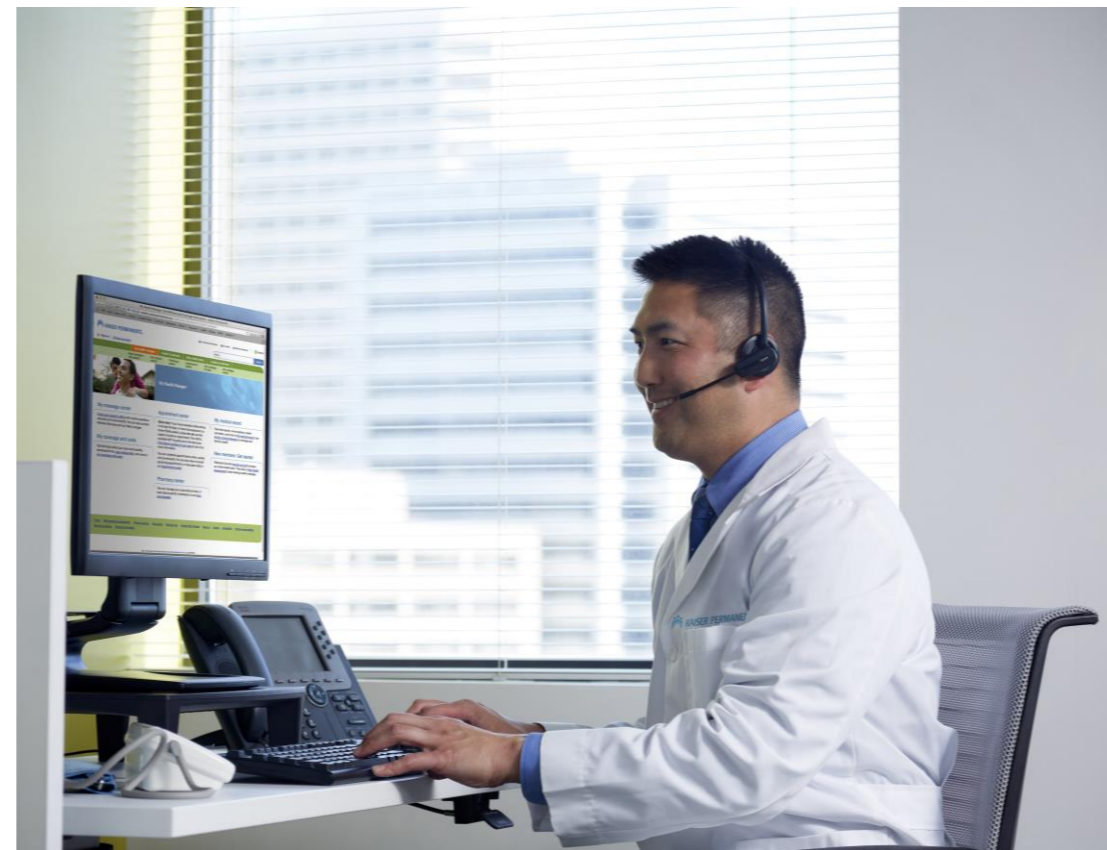
Trial Components

At each phase, consider three trial components critical to effectiveness and implementation of digital interventions



Digital Interventions

(Philippe et al., 2022;
Bewick et al., 2017)



Clinical Support Services

(Hermes et al., 2019)

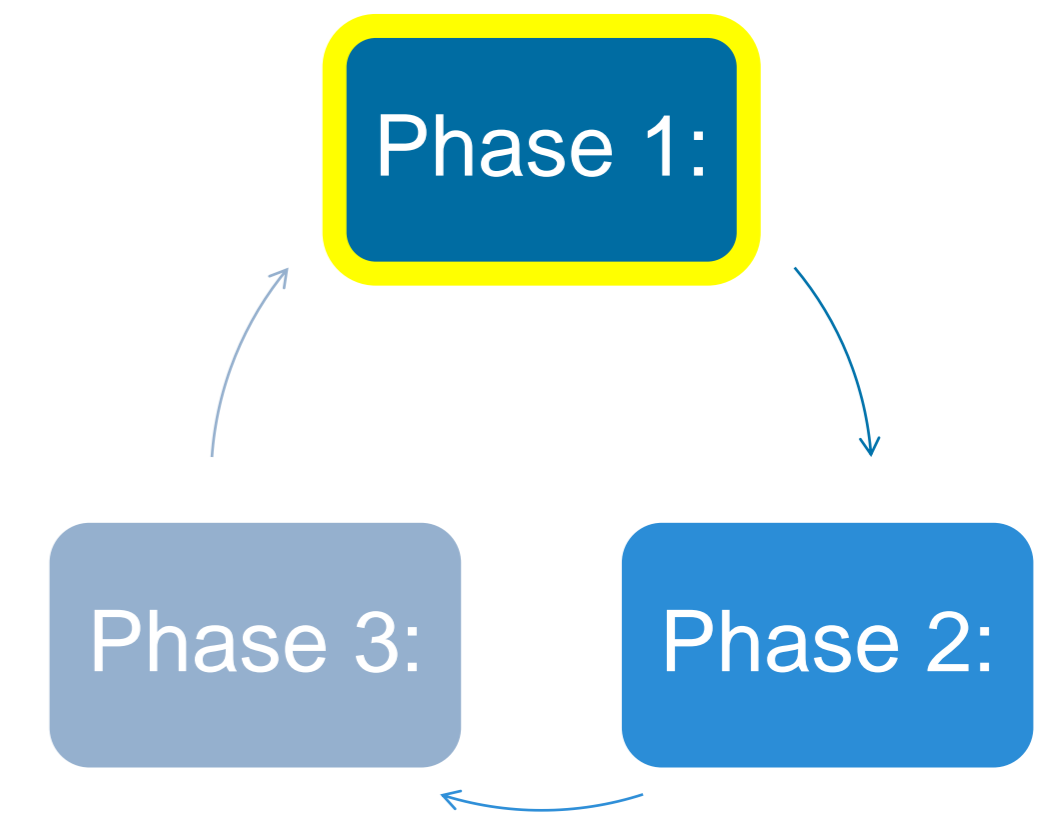


Implementation Strategies

(Powell et al., 2015;
Graham et al., 2021)

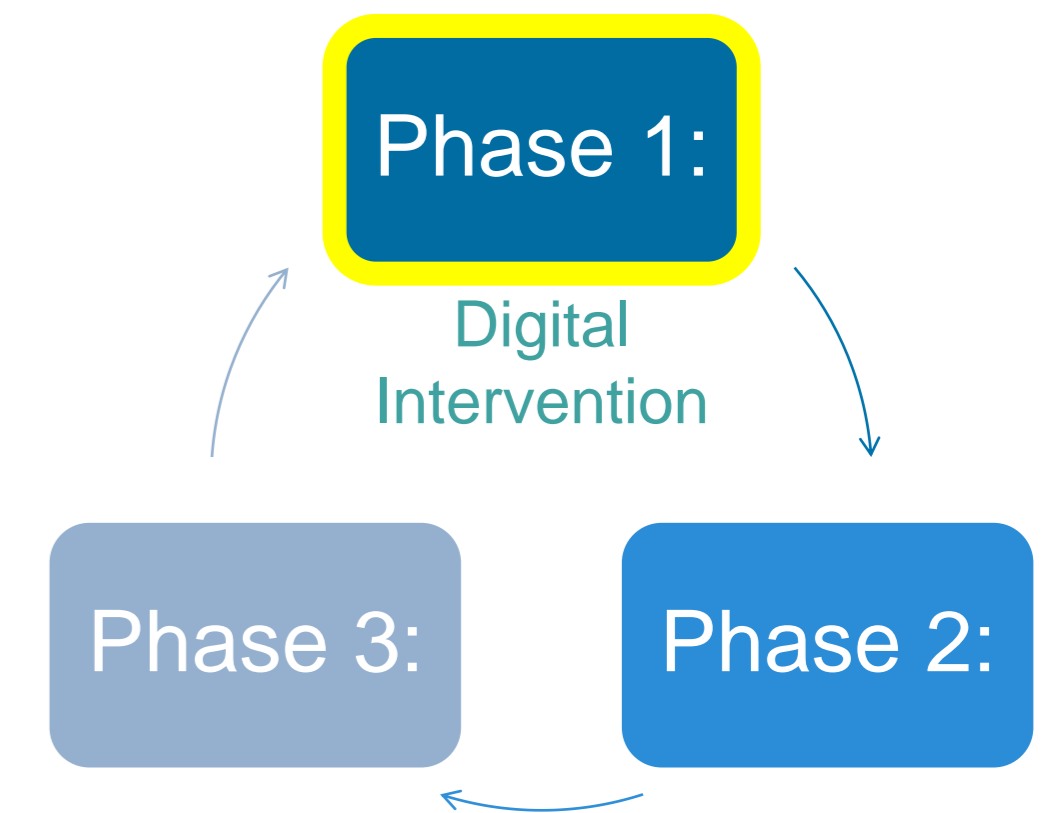
Phase 1: Frame the research question

- All aspects of the trial design should follow the research questions.
- Identify timely, relevant question **worthy of an experimental design**
- Frame the question in terms of the components to be tested...



Phase 1: Frame the research question

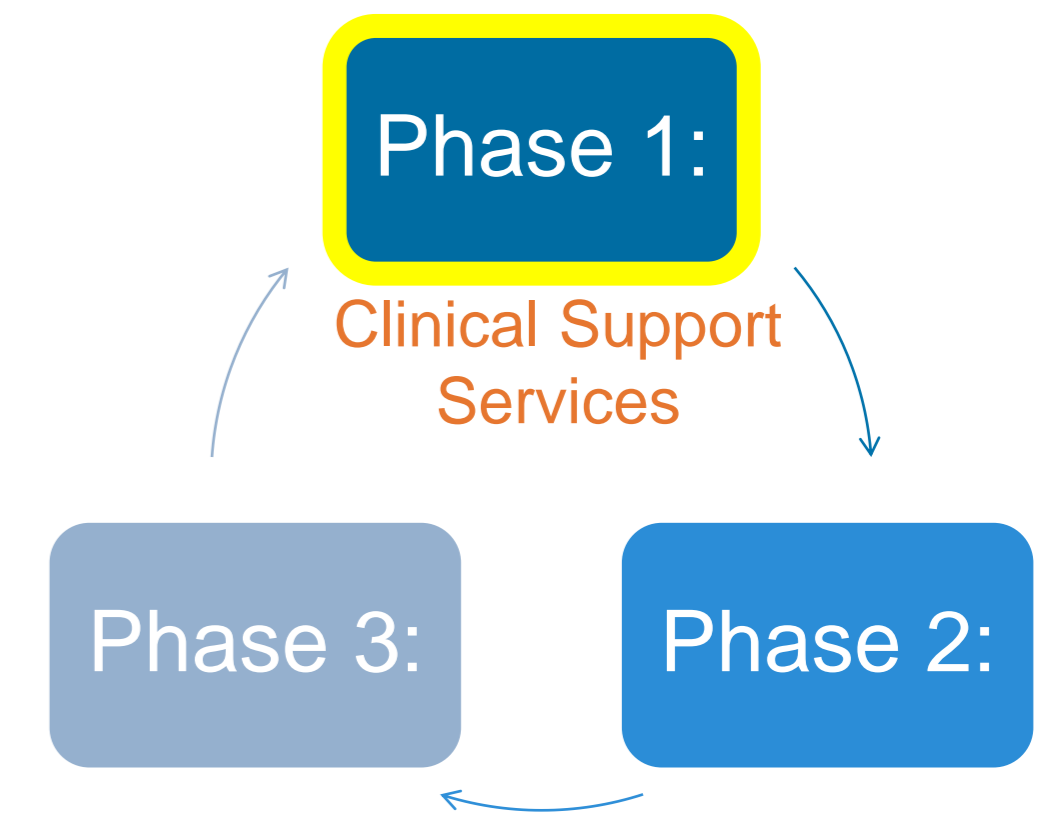
- All aspects of the trial design should follow the research questions.
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- Frame the question in terms of the components to be tested...



	Digital intervention
Research question	Does the digital intervention work in this population or setting? Which digital intervention to use?
Rationale	Stakeholders want to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether to invest • in which product to invest
Example	Secondary in DIGITS Trial

Phase 1: Frame the research question

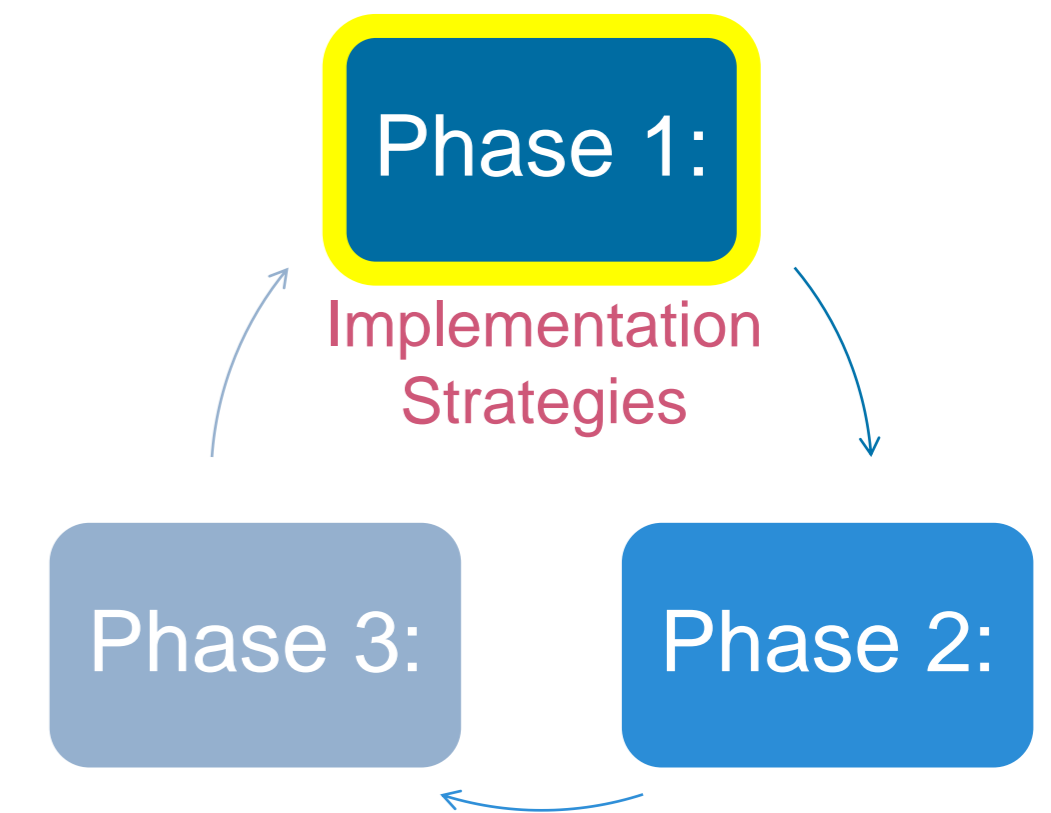
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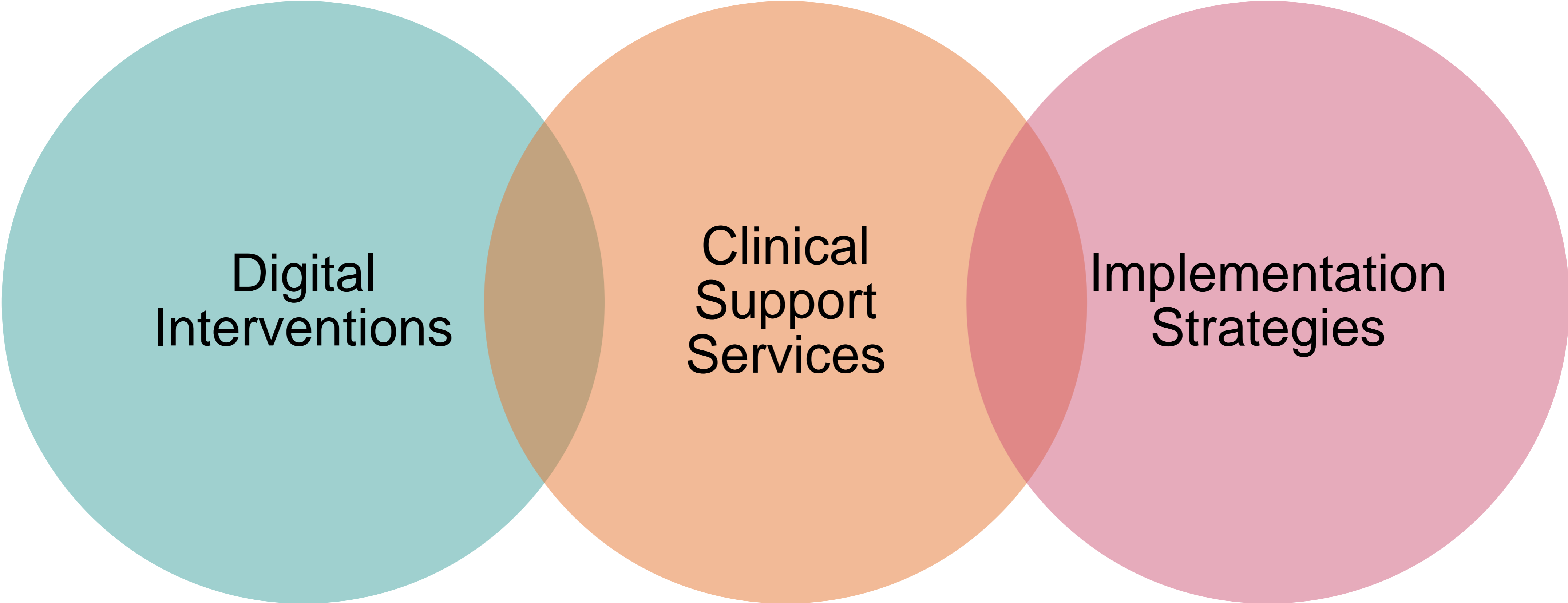
	Digital intervention	Clinical support services
Research question	Does the digital intervention work in this population or setting? Which digital intervention to use?	What approaches for offering digital interventions are needed to support delivery in real world?
Rationale	Stakeholders want to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether to invest • in which product to invest 	Stakeholders want to know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to reorganize resources • hire new staff • contract out to a 3rd party
Example	Secondary in DIGITS Trial	Primary in DIGITS Trial

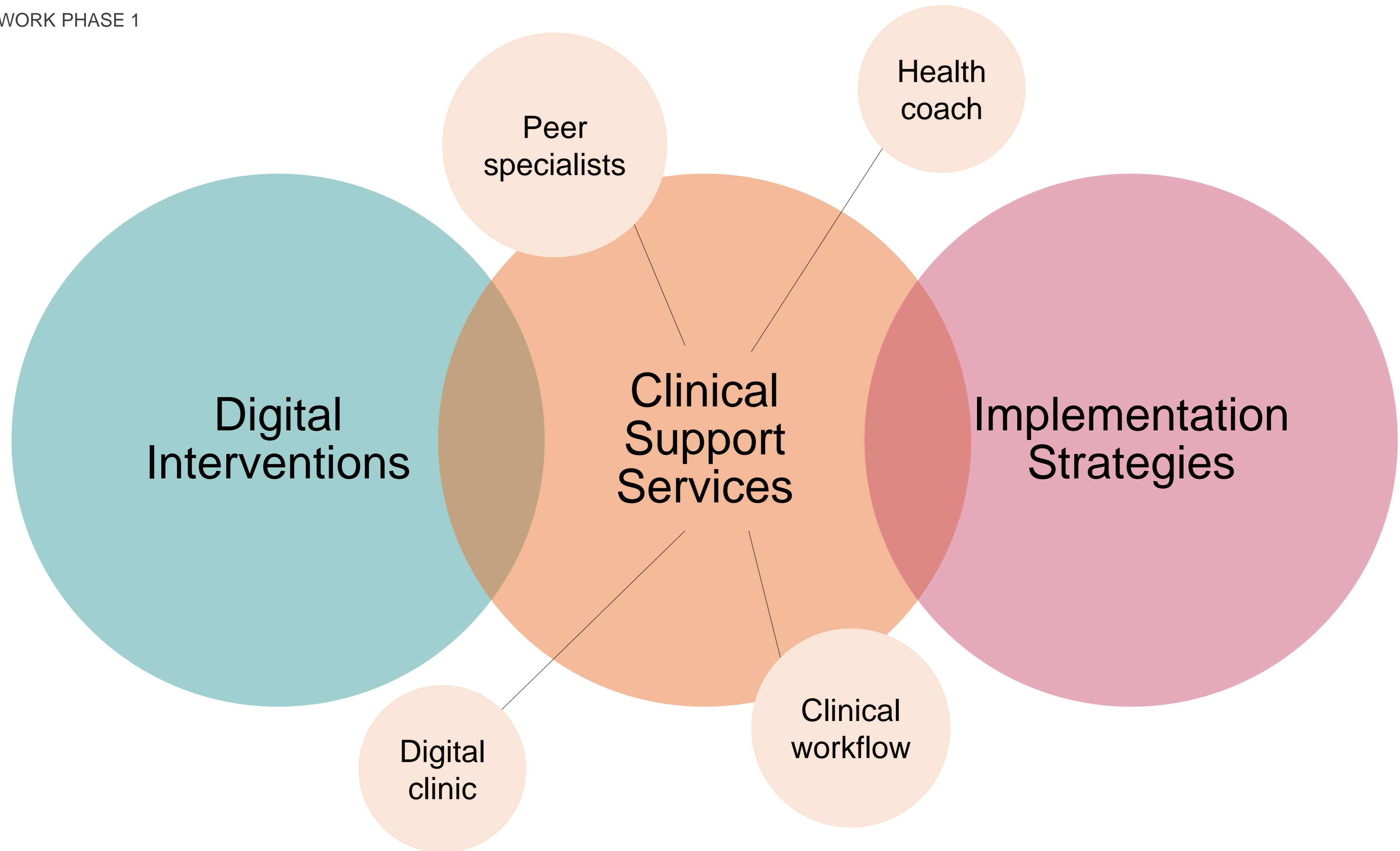
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- Identify timely, relevant question **worthy of an experimental design**
- Frame the question in terms of the components to be tested...



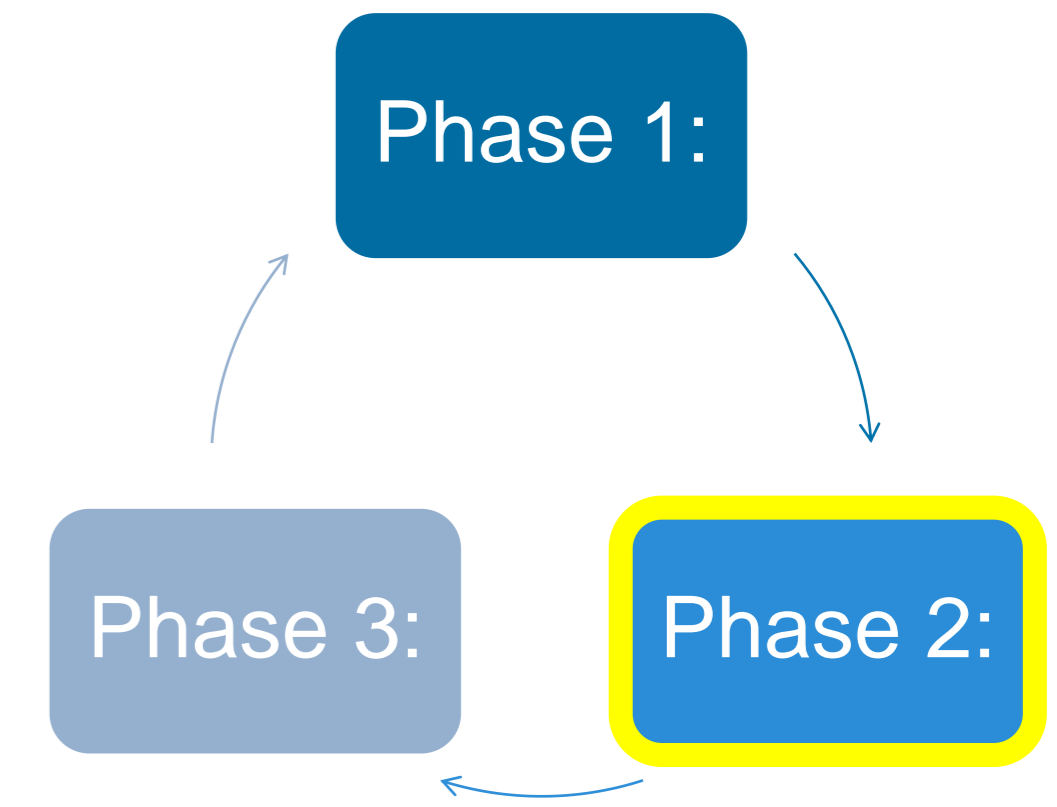
	Digital intervention	Clinical support services	Implementation strategies
Research question	Does the digital intervention work in this population or setting? Which digital intervention to use?	What approaches for offering digital interventions are needed to support delivery in real world?	How to encourage adoption, implementation, and sustainment of digital interventions in clinics?
Rationale	Stakeholders want to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether to invest • in which product to invest 	Stakeholders want to know <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to reorganize resources • hire new staff • contract out to a 3rd party 	Stakeholders have buy-in but want to know: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to maximize uptake of digital interventions in clinics
Example	Secondary in DIGITS Trial	Primary in DIGITS Trial	Primary in DIGITS Trial





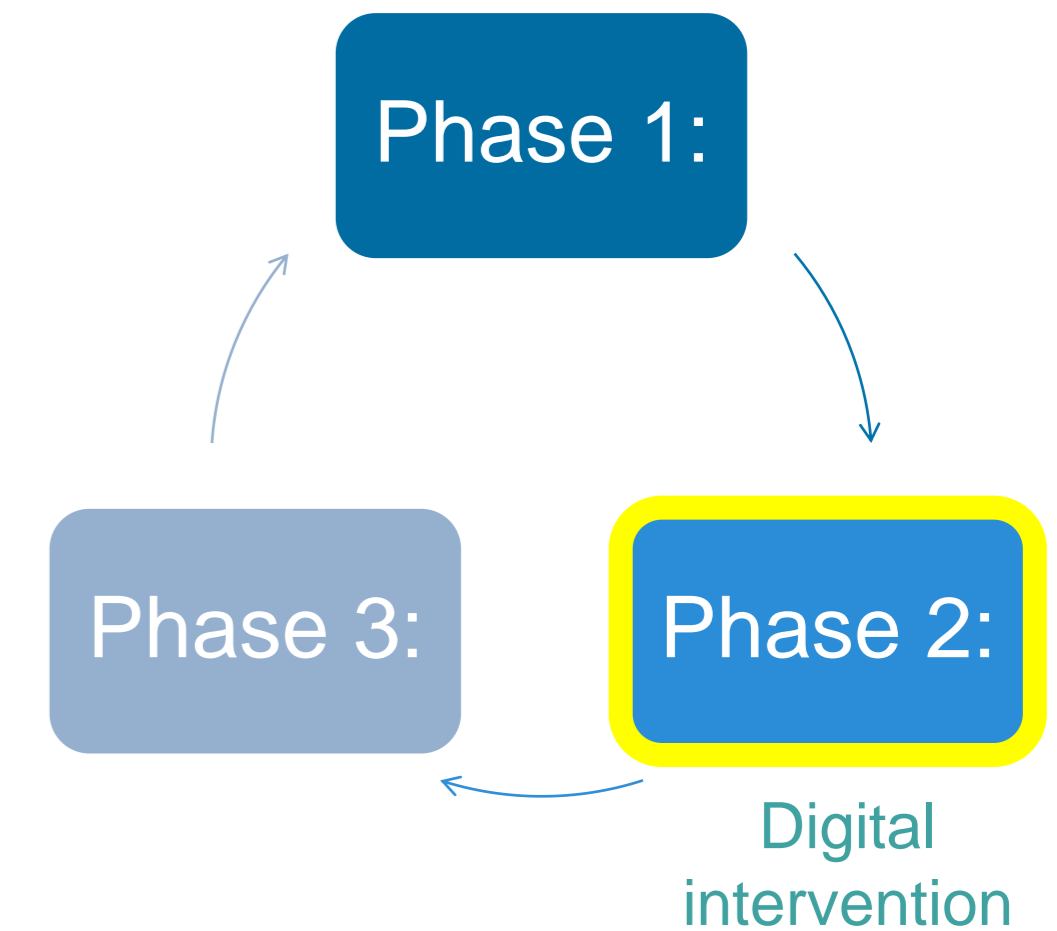
Phase 2: Delineate components under study

- Likely overlap between components
- Bring **clarity to the boundaries** of each for your study
- Critical to health system stakeholders
- Delineate based on four dimensions (Proctor et al., 2013)

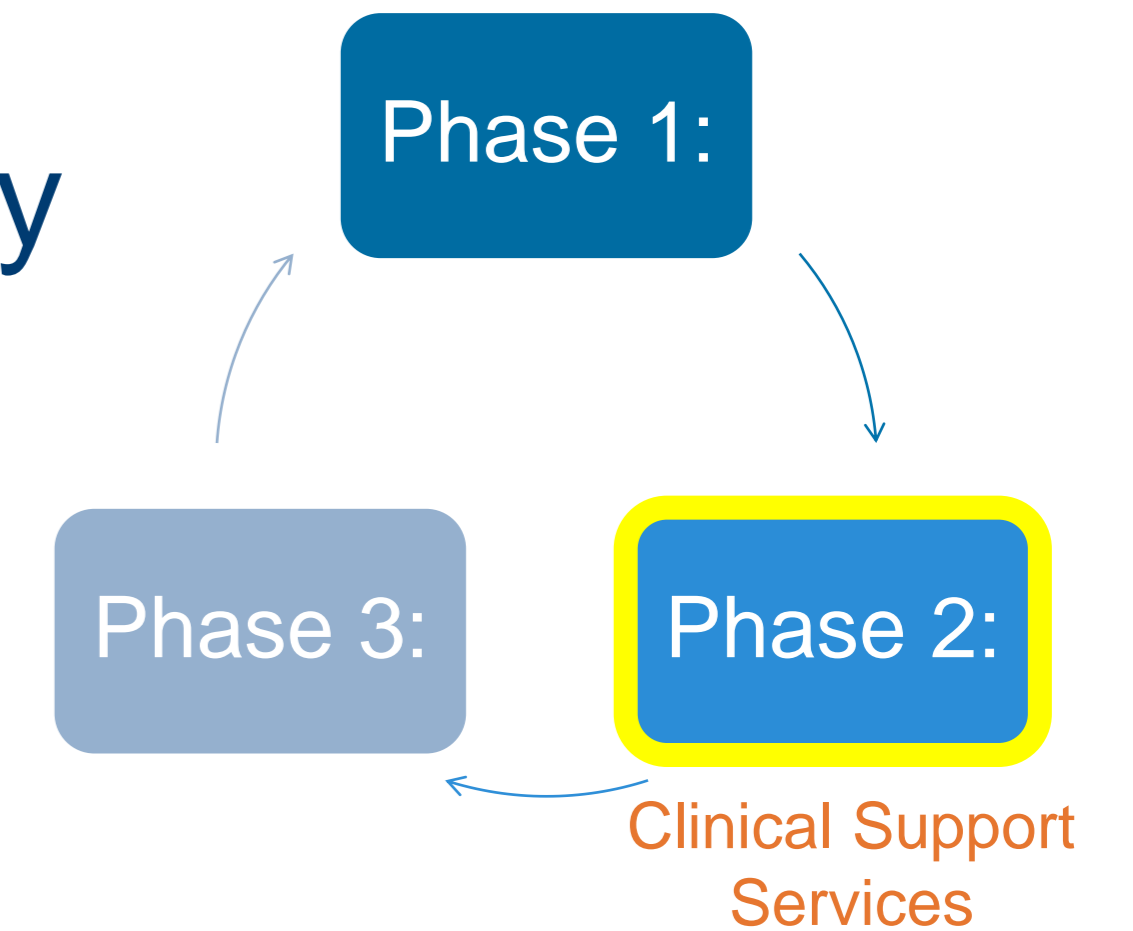


Phase 2: Delineate digital interventions under study

Component	Actor	Activities	Action Target	Proximal Outcome
Digital Intervention: reSET and reSET-O	Patients with substance use disorder	Spent time using app to engage in:		Substance use reductions
		1) Community reinforcement approach	1) Explore healthier ways to meet need	Treatment engagement
		2) Contingency management	2) Incent adherence and abstinence	
		3) Fluency training	3) Reinforce concept mastery	

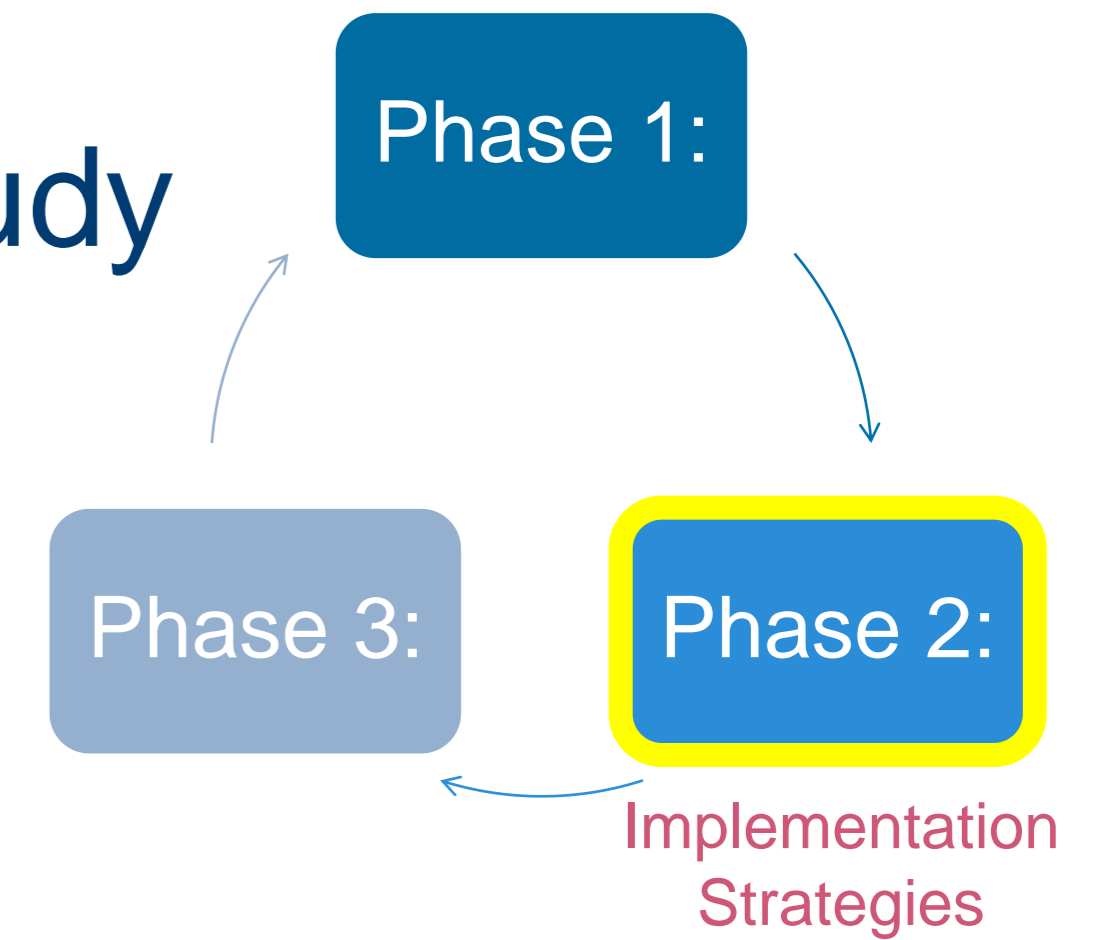


Phase 2: Delineate **clinical support services** under study



Component	Actor	Activities	Action Target	Proximal Outcome
Clinical Support Service: Health Coaching	“Centralized” medical assistant	1) Conduct phone outreach to patients who might benefit	1 & 2) Activate patients; reduce burden on clinicians	Fidelity
		2) Monitor and encourage engagement		Feasibility
		3) Encourage practice of skills	3) Support patients’ skill development	Health services outcomes
		4) Facilitate follow-up with care team	4) Promote collaboration between patients and providers	

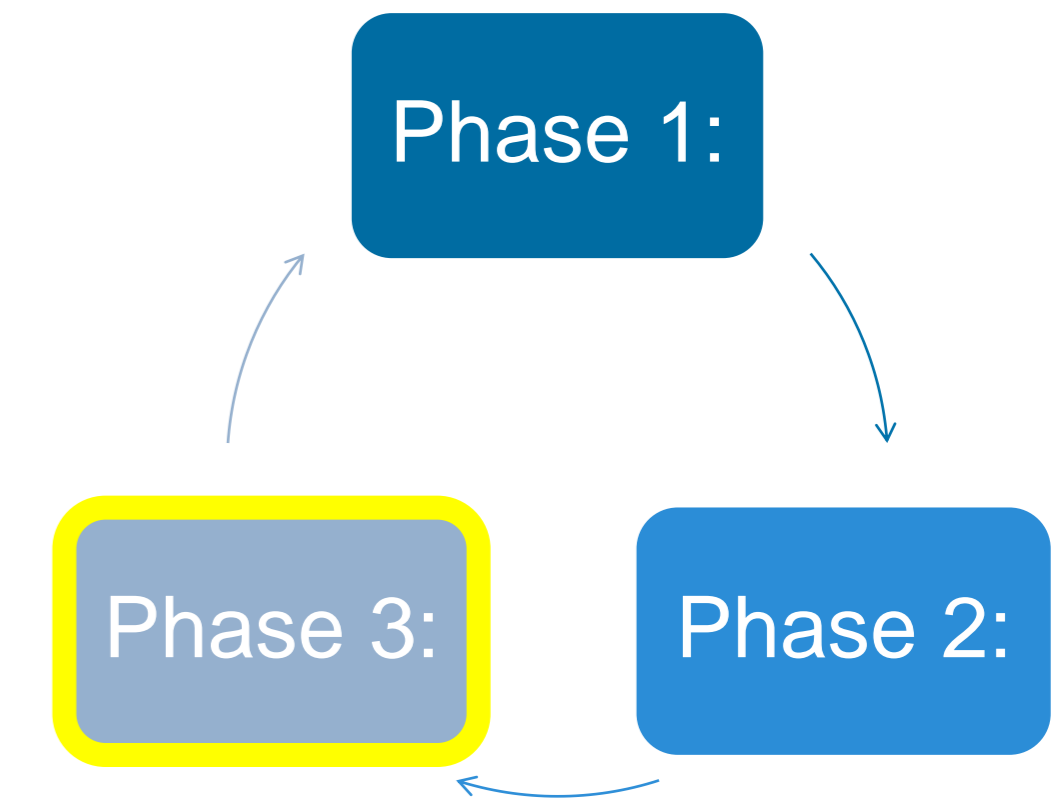
Phase 2: Delineate **implementation strategies** under study



Component	Actor	Activities	Action Target	Proximal Outcome
Implementation Strategy: Practice Facilitation	Practice facilitator (external)	In the context of a supportive relationship, deliver:		Reach
				Adoption
		1) Education	1) Create clinic-wide demand	
		2) Audit & feedback	2) Clarify measurable goals to improve performance	
		3) PDSA cycles	3) Reinforce mastery of treatment concepts	
		4) Engagement	4) Support local implementation	

Phase 3: Specify core features of the trial design

- Features of trial design should be driven by the research question
- **PICO** is a widely-known strategy for reframing research questions in a precise and testable manner
- Some applications of PICO recommend 2 additional dimensions: **PICOTS** to capture intervention complexity



Phase 3: Specify core features of the trial design using PICO

Population of Interest

Who is the trial targeting?
What are the important characteristics of this population?

Intervention

What is the experiment or thing to be tested?

- Digital intervention
- Clinical support service
- Implementation strategy

Comparator

What is the control or comparator?
How will the trial isolate the studied component

Outcome

What does the researcher hope to accomplish or improve?
Is this an effectiveness, health services, or implementation outcome?

Timing

Over what period will the trial occur?
What is the period for follow-up?

Setting

Where does the intervention occur?
In what type of healthcare setting does this trial occur?

Phase 3: Specify core features of the trial design using PICO

Population of Interest

Integrated mental health and primary care providers

Patients with a drug use disorder

Intervention

What is the experiment or thing to be tested?

- Digital intervention
- Clinical support service
- Implementation strategy

Comparator

What is the control or comparator?

How will the trial isolate the studied component

Outcome

What does the researcher hope to accomplish or improve?

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Setting

Where does the intervention occur?

In what type of healthcare setting does this trial occur?

Phase 3: Specify core features of the trial design using PICO

Population of Interest

Integrated mental health and primary care providers

Patients with a drug use disorder

Intervention

1) Clinical support service:
Health coaching

2) Implementation strategy:
Practice facilitation

Comparator

What is the control or comparator?

How will the trial isolate the studied component

Outcome

What does the researcher hope to accomplish or improve?

Is this an effectiveness, health services, or implementation outcome?

Timing

Over what period will the trial occur?

What is the period for follow-up?

Setting

Where does the intervention occur?

In what type of healthcare setting does this trial occur?

Phase 3: Specify core features of the trial design using PICO

Population of Interest

Integrated mental health and primary care providers

Patients with a drug use disorder

Intervention

1) Clinical support service:
Health coaching

2) Implementation strategy:
Practice facilitation

Comparator

What is the control or comparator?

How will the trial isolate the studied component

(Freedland et al., 2019)

Outcome

What does the researcher hope to accomplish or improve?

Is this an effectiveness, health services, or implementation outcome?

Timing

Over what period will the trial occur?

What is the period for follow-up?

Setting

Where does the intervention occur?

In what type of healthcare setting does this trial occur?

Phase 3: Specify core features of the trial design using PICO

Population of Interest

Integrated mental health and primary care providers

Patients with a drug use disorder

Intervention

1) Clinical support service:
Health coaching

2) Implementation strategy:
Practice facilitation

Comparator

“Standard implementation”

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Fidelity

Reach

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Outcome

Fidelity

Reach

Timing

12-week intervention (fidelity)

1-year active implementation period (reach)

Setting

Where does the intervention occur?

In what type of healthcare setting does this trial occur?

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Timing

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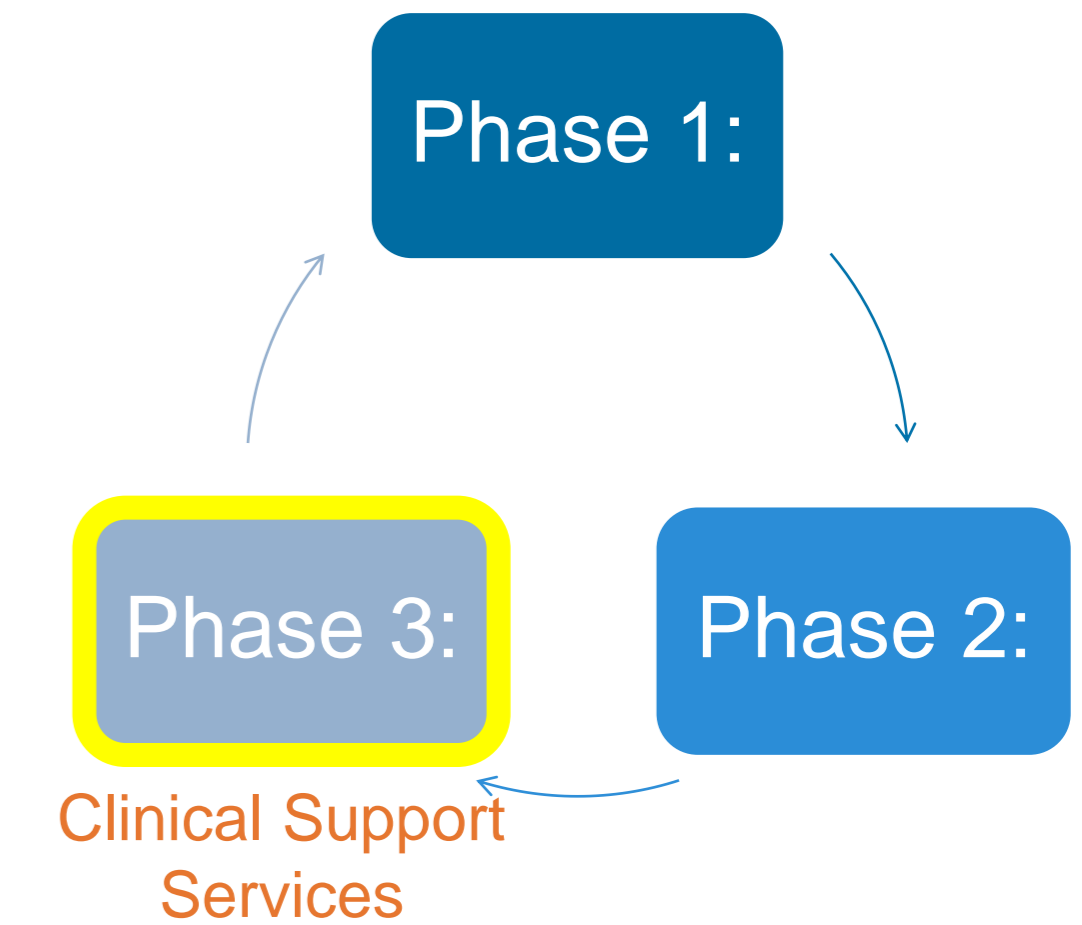
Setting

Integrated healthcare setting

Phase 3: Specify core features of the trial design

1) HEALTH COACHING (clinical support service)

In the context of an integrated healthcare setting (**S**), do primary care clinics randomized to health coaching (**I**) compared to standard implementation (**C**) have a higher mean number of weeks in which patients with documented drug use disorder (**P**) use reSET and reSET-O as recommended [fidelity] (**O**) over the 12-week intervention (**T**)?



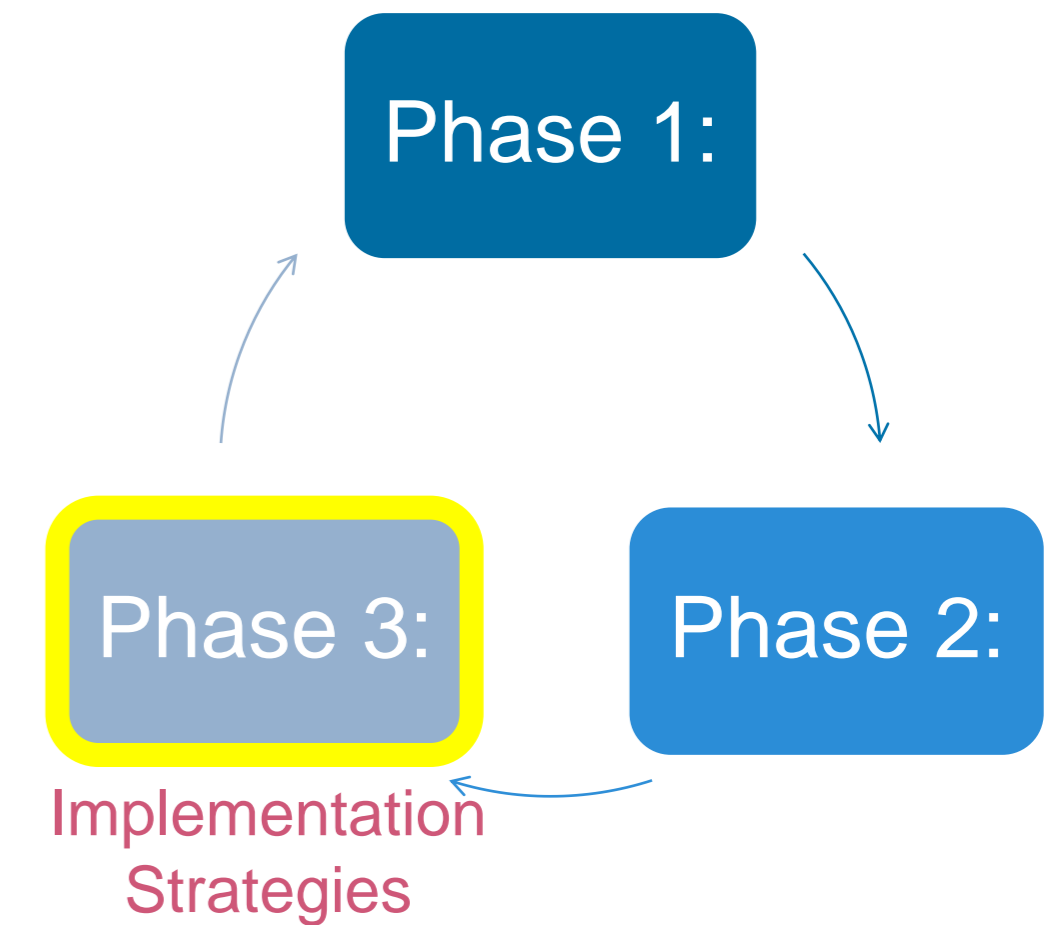
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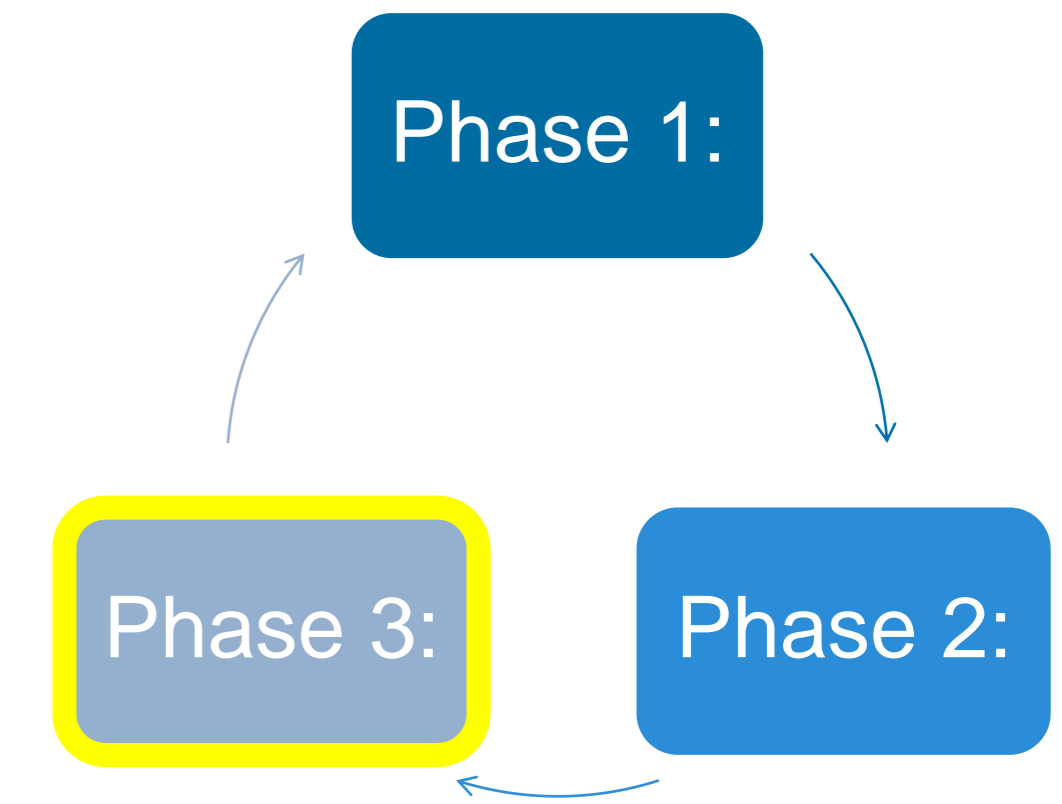
2) PRACTICE FACILITATION (intervention strategy)

In the context of an integrated healthcare setting (**S**), do primary care clinicians who care for patients with a drug use disorder (**P**) in clinics randomized to practice facilitation (**I**) compared to standard implementation (**C**) prescribe reSET and reSET-O to a higher proportion of eligible patients with documented drug use disorder [reach] (**O**) during a 1-year active implementation period (**T**)?



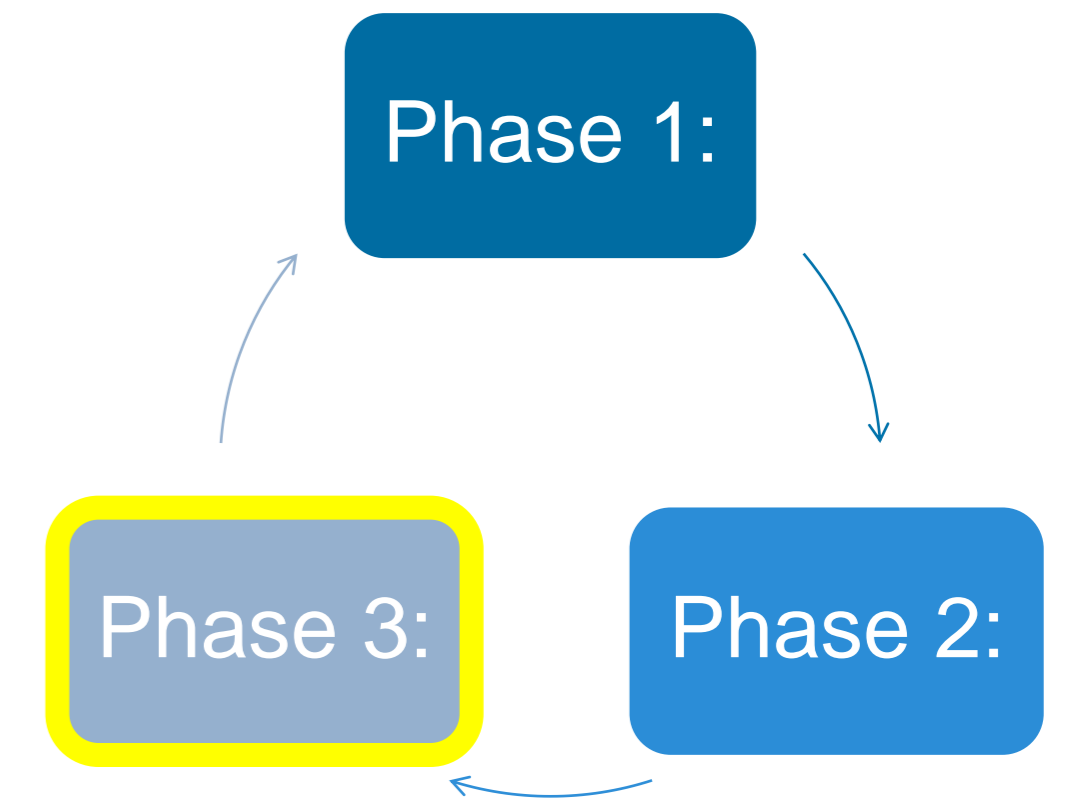
Phase 3: Specify hybrid trial design

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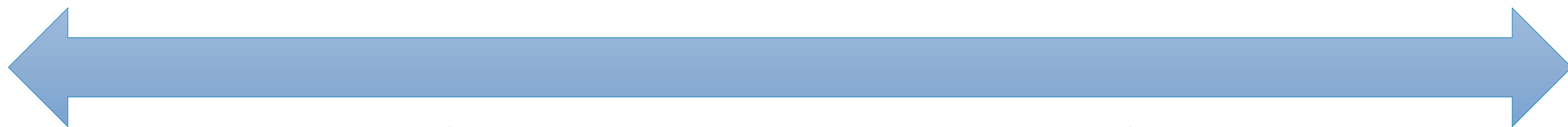


Effectiveness

patient health outcomes (typically)
real-world settings with researchers delivering interventions

Implementation

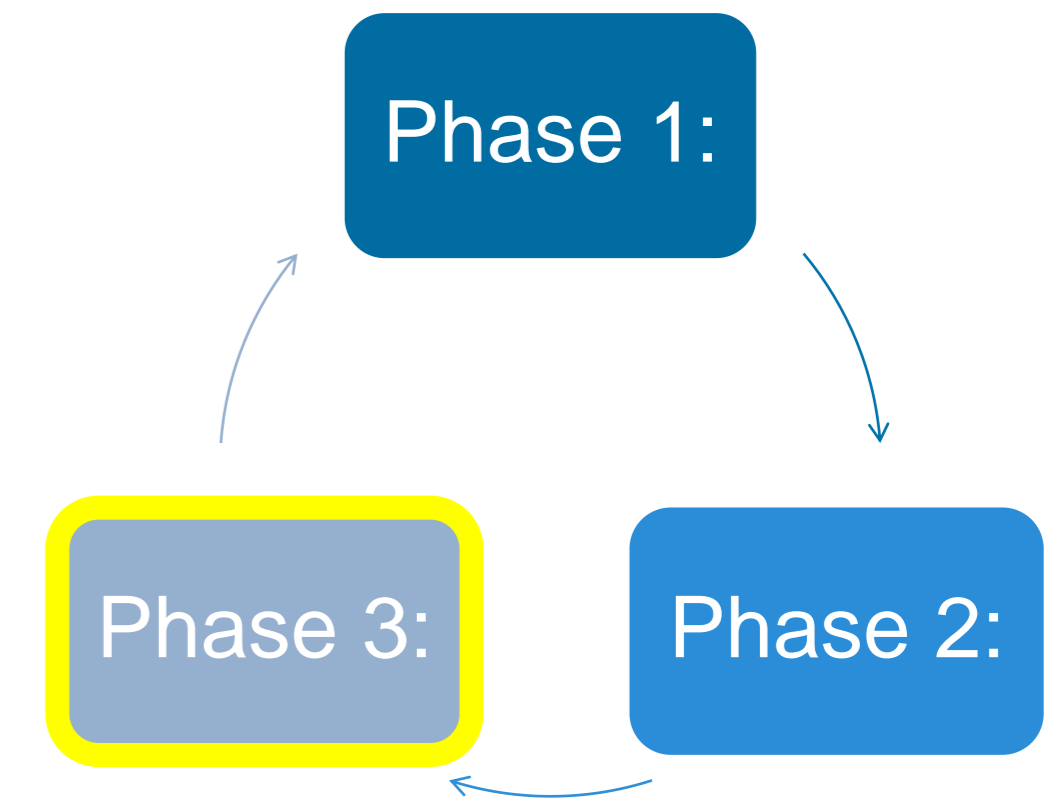
clinic/provider outcomes (typically)
real-world setting with clinicians delivering intervention



Hybrid Trials

Phase 3: Specify hybrid trial design

- Hybrid trials allow the researcher to address questions related to **implementation** while gathering data on **effectiveness**
- Well-suited when effectiveness is lacking/limited but there is **political will to implement**

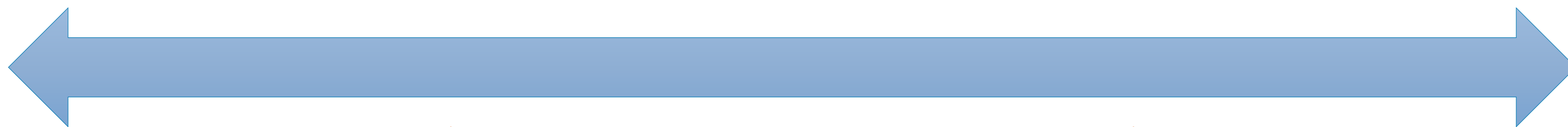


Effectiveness

patient health outcomes (typically)
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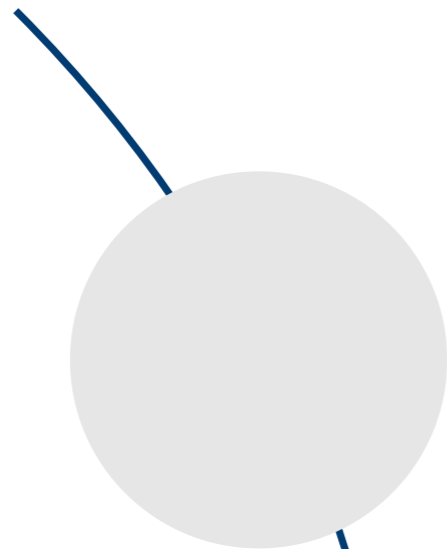
Implementation

clinic/provider outcomes (typically)
real-world setting with clinicians delivering intervention

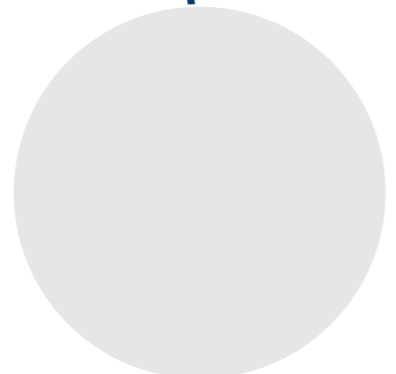


Hybrid Trials

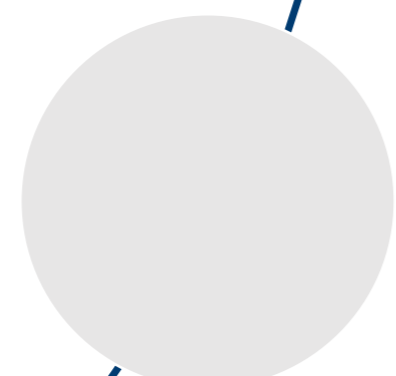
Phase 3: Specify hybrid trial design



Hybrid Type I studies have a primary research question about effectiveness and a secondary focus on implementation



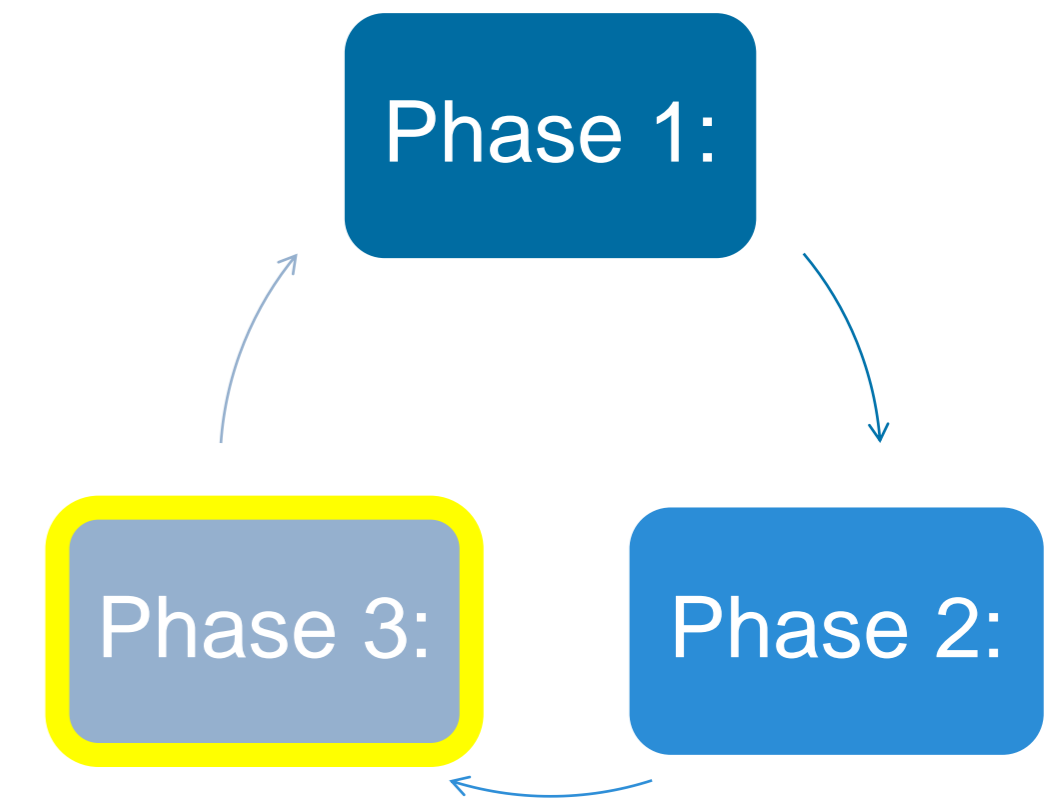
Hybrid Type II studies have an equal focus on effectiveness and implementation



Hybrid Type III studies have a primary research question about implementation and a secondary focus on effectiveness

Phase 3: Specify hybrid trial design

- Hybrid trials allow the researcher to address questions related to **implementation** while gathering data on **effectiveness**
- Well-suited when effectiveness is lacking/limited but there is **political will to implement**

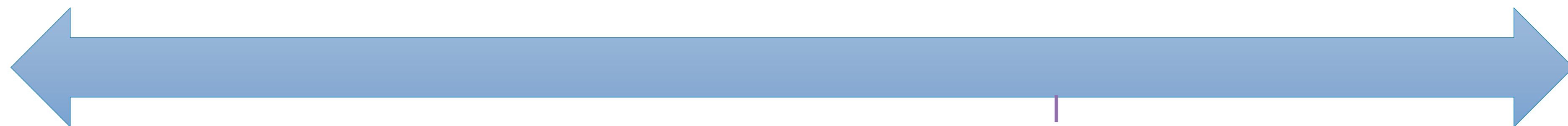


Effectiveness

patient health outcomes (typically)
real-world settings with researchers delivering interventions

Implementation

clinic/provider outcomes (typically)
real-world setting with clinicians delivering intervention



Hybrid Trials
Type I Type II Type III

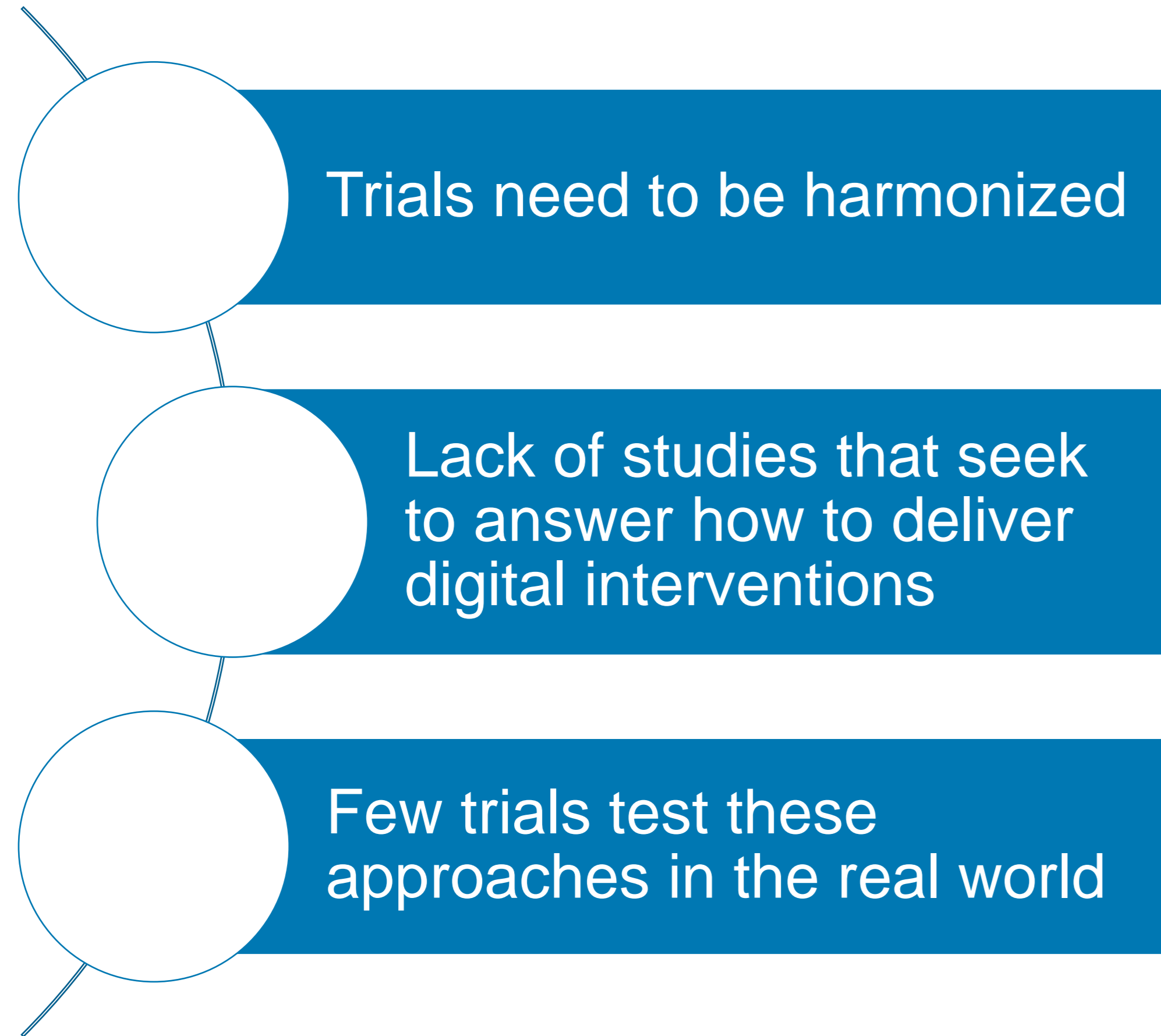
DIGITS Trial
(Glass et al.)

Phase 3: Specify hybrid trial design

Where do Clinical Support Services fit?

- Could be considered Type I, II, or III
- Consider **research question** and **primary outcome(s)**
- Important to clarify and report rationale

Implications



Helps researchers **design, review,** and **execute** trials of digital interventions; helps **communicate** to decision-makers



Considers the impact **clinical support services** have on effectiveness and implementation of digital interventions



Advocates for the use of **hybrid trials** to advance evidence-to-practice and applicability in real-world settings

This is a working framework.
We welcome your questions, comments, and feedback!



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 Tessa.e.matson@kp.org or Joseph.e.glass@kp.org



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