

Remotely Possible?: Thinking about Teletherapy

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Tele-health

- ▀ Telehealth - remote delivery of healthcare
- ▀ Teletherapy:
 - ▀ phone, email, webcams, mobile apps, webpages
 - ▀ real time – e.g., via videolink, webcams or phone
 - ▀ time delayed - via email

Advantages

- ▶ Access - physical, medical, psychological, and/or mobility disabilities, as well as distance (reduced inequity based on geography).
- ▶ Access to rare / skilled specialist staff, or a culturally-congruent provider
- ▶ Time advantages for clinician (e.g., digital admin of psychometric measures)
- ▶ Time advantages for patient/client
- ▶ Convenience, flexible scheduling
- ▶ More time to collect information about thoughts, feelings and behaviours outside of the sessions (e.g., electronic logging at time points)
- ▶ Reduce stigma of making appointment
- ▶ Cost savings
- ▶ ...

And best of all...

- ▶ Research finds that it works!





- ▀ What does it mean for traditional therapy? What are the legal pitfalls? Does it work? How does one do teletherapy? For whom is it appropriate? Etc etc



Potential problems

- ▶ For clinicians
- ▶ For clients



For Clinicians

- ▶ WHO?
- ▶ Risk management
 - ▶ ask clients to identify, in advance, their local emergency resources for any unforeseen circumstance
- ▶ Supports
- ▶ Alliance/Rapport
- ▶ Just because we can, does not mean we should
- ▶ Regular reviews about appropriateness of telehealth – still appropriate/effective/safe?

Practicalities

- Digital literacy
- Access - internet
- Storage and security
- Privacy – who else is around?
- Speed and timing of communications
- Costs
- Legislation / ATP's
- Safety





For mental wellness

- Probably not the first session
- Unlikely to be smart if there are more-than-minor risk concerns (self or other)
- Only useful if there is sufficient digital literacy on both sides
- And bandwidth!
- Even if 'logical' it may not suit the client and/or clinician
 - sometimes the setting around a physical appointment, and the skills in respect to setting/making/keeping the appointment 'in person' are a useful part of therapy



What should a client ask themselves about telehealth?

- Will it work for me?
- Will I feel connected to my psychologist/doctor/healthcare professional?
- Will using telehealth make me feel more isolated?
- Do I feel comfortable using technology to receive services?
- Do I have the technology?
- Can I access the technology?
- Am I comfortable receiving services if I cannot see and/or hear my treating clinician?
- Am I comfortable if I have to see another professional in an emergency?

Worth discussing

- What technology will I need to work with you? How will I get this technology?
- Will I use the technology already in my home or will I go to another location?
- What if I need a family member or caregiver to assist me during our sessions? How will that work?
- What should I do if we experience technical difficulties?
- What should I do in case there is an emergency and I cannot contact you?
- Will my medical insurance cover telehealth services





- equivalent standards of care
- standards of competence and conduct maintained
- additional challenges such as the need to be highly skilled in the use of telecommunication technologies and to be fully informed about the laws and regulations pertaining to professional practice in the jurisdiction in which clients are located.
- Additional safeguards for clients must be proactively considered.
- If quality of care compromised by the delivery medium, wisdom of delivering services via this method must be reconsidered