Chapter 60
Effectiveness of Internet Based Psychotherapeutic Intervention in Common Psychiatric Disorders

Shilpa Suresh Bisen

Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology Nagpur, Nagpur, India

Yogesh M Deshpande

Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology Nagpur, Nagpur, India

ABSTRACT

The rationale of the article is to describe the use of the Internet for psychological treatment in a clinical setting. Internet-based psychotherapy as a therapeutic tool, that offers an anonymous way for people to search for information and participate in treatment. Research studies on web-based psychotherapy for the major depressive disorder, anxiety disorders and other psychological conditions has grown swiftly in the last decades. Findings revealed that some forms of Internet-based treatments often lead to results similar to those of traditional face to face psychotherapy. The advantages of Internet-based interventions are high-cost effectiveness, greater access to evidence-based treatment, and greater access to patients in remote locations. The deterioration of symptoms, the emergence of new psychological symptoms, a high rate of abandonment and the frustration caused by technical problems are some of the negative effects of Internet interventions. In conclusion, there is now ample evidence that Internet based-interventions work for common mental disorders such as depression, anxiety disorder, alcohol consumption, smoking cessation, eating disorders, headaches and insomnia. Research on interventions on the Internet is advancing at high speed, while the proliferation and prolonged implementation of interventions on the Internet in regular assistance is still in its infancy.

INTRODUCTION

Internet-based psychotherapeutic intervention is mainly a self-directed psychotherapeutic intervention program implemented via a potential website program used by patients seeking mental health assistance. These are categorized into psycho-education intervention on the Internet. Therapeutic intervention on the basis of self-directed Internet-based therapeutic interventions on the Internet with human support. The benefits of Internet-based psychotherapy are highly cost-effectiveness, better access to evidence-based management, and feasible approach to patients in remote locations (Carlbring & Andersson, 2006). The worsening of symptoms, the appearance of new psychosomatic symptoms, elevated rate of abandonment, the lack of positive effect expected in the symptoms of the target and the annoyance caused by technological problems are some of the disadvantages of Internet interventions (Boettcher et al., 2014). The Internet has the potential to have a great impact on society and human behaviour. One of the most promising applications of the Internet is within the psychological and therapeutic fields. There are many potential benefits to providing psychotherapy and assessment on your computer. Internet-based therapy is a form of psychotherapy conducted over the Internet rather than in face-to-face sessions. Therapeutic sessions may be conducted using instant messaging, chat rooms, or e-mail messages. Internet-based therapy is also called online therapy or e-therapy.

There are pros and cons to both sides of the online versus face-to-face therapy issue. First, communicating through e-mail, online chat, or instant messages has the same drawbacks of any written-only communication: The non-verbal cues such as tone of voice, facial expression, and body language are missing, making interpretation of the message more problematic than in a face-to-face situation. On the other hand, the relative anonymity of online interactions makes such therapeutic relationships more attractive to those who would hesitate to go into a therapist's office for fear of being found out by others, fear of embarrassment, or unwillingness or inability to get to the office. In addition, online therapy tends to be less expensive than in-office therapy, a consideration for many clients. As with any service provided over the Internet, one must be an informed consumer not only before choosing an e-therapist but even before deciding to use Internet-based therapy itself. Because Internet-based therapy is an emerging field, there are still many issues to be resolved. Obviously, one must check the professional credentials of a therapist to make sure that he or she is licensed, whether one is choosing a therapist for online or in-office therapy. In addition, it is unclear at this time whether it is legal for a therapist licensed in one state to treat a patient in another state. Choosing a therapist in one's own state makes this issue irrelevant, but requires research.

Client/therapist confidentiality is important in any therapeutic relationship. When choosing an online provider of psychological services, one must be certain not only that the therapist subscribes to a professional code of ethics, but also that any information—including personal data about the client—is kept confidential and not sold to or shared with third parties. Similarly, it is important to check that the Web site used in online therapy is secure and that conversations, instant messages, and e-mail transmissions between client and therapist are not recorded on the site's secured host computer.

Internet-based therapy shows promise for helping people who could not or would not otherwise engage in a therapeutic relationship. This potential is beginning to be tested in research. However, much of this research also recommends that Internet-based therapy is used in conjunction with face-to-face sessions. There are still many technical, logistical, and ethical questions to be answered regarding how the Internet best can be used for therapy.

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