TELEPSYCHIATRY: ACCESS IN RURAL AREAS

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Telepsychiatry

Provides a wide range of services including psychiatric evaluations, therapy (individual, group, family therapy), patient education and medication management
Introduction

- Rural areas
- Behavioral disorders
- Telepsychiatry
Rural areas

19.3% of U.S. population lives in an rural area
Rural areas have higher than average health care workforce shortages which limit accessibility to health care services
Behavioral disorders

Accessibility – Rural residents often travel long distances to receive services, are less likely to be insured for mental health services, and less likely to recognize an illness.

Availability – Chronic shortages of mental health professionals exist and mental health providers are more likely to practice in urban centers.

Acceptability – The stigma of needing or receiving mental healthcare and the fewer choices of trained professionals who work in rural areas create barriers to care.
Access to Mental Healthcare

When dealing with rural populations numerous barriers limit access
- Transportation
- Number of providers
- Stigma
- Poverty
- Lack of insurance
Utilization of telepsychiatry has been shown to overcome access barriers by allowing psychiatrists to connect to health personnel staff and patient from a great distant away while keeping treatment in the patients’ community which has proven to help them better manage their disease, their symptoms, and their lives.

Telepsychiatry ➔ increased patient satisfaction ➔ fewer missed appointments
Access to Mental Healthcare

- Telepsychiatry has been shown not to create resources, but to reorganize them.
- There has been a continued shortage of mental health providers with a national average of more than 75% of U.S. counties that qualify as having a shortage, 85% of shortage stemming from rural areas, and half of all U.S. counties reporting no mental health providers.
- Telepsychiatry increases access to mental health care for rural areas by linking patients to high-quality mental health services that practice evidence-based care and best practices while providers are located in more populated areas.
Improved Quality of Mental Healthcare

- Telepsychiatry via video conferencing has been deemed equivalent to face-to-face care received in a mental health facility or physician’s office.

- The integration of mental healthcare into primary health facilities using telepsychiatry has been a method that has increased the quality of care while treating adults in rural communities.
Improved Quality of Mental Healthcare

- Telepsychiatry has been a successful treatment method for Veterans and other adult patients who felt more comfortable being treated without having to be face-to-face with their psychiatrist.

- When telepsychiatry has been used as a treatment with veterans that utilize the VA for healthcare, admissions to hospitals and facilities due to psychiatric issues have decreased by 25%.
Discussion

- Having telepsychiatry as an option has maintained mental health for populations that would normally go undiagnosed.

- Integrating telepsychiatry in the primary care facilities would increase quality of healthcare.
Conclusion

- Findings suggest: that telepsychiatry helps meet patients’ needs for convenient, affordable and readily-accessible mental health services

- Benefits include but are not limited to:
  - Improved access and mental health specialty care that might not otherwise be available
  - Improve continuity of care and follow-up
  - Reduced potential transportation barriers, such as lack of transportation or the need for long drives
Any Questions?