

CLAHRCBITE

Brokering innovation through evidence

Comparing face-to-face and videoconferencing psychotherapy in patient-therapist working relationships



Results

Videoconferencing psychotherapy (VCP) was worse than face-to-face therapy for developing patient-therapist working relationships (working alliances) but was as effective at reducing target symptoms (outcome).

Who needs to know?

- Service commissioners
- Practicing psychologists and psychotherapists
- Those accessing psychological support

What did we do:

A systematic literature review was conducted on 12 studies reporting working alliance and outcome in VCP which met pre-stated inclusion/exclusion criteria. Of the 12 studies, six reported on a face-to-face control group and were included in two separate meta-analyses comparing whether the working alliance and outcome effectiveness were worse in VCP compared to face-to-face psychotherapy. Further sensitivity analyses were conducted by excluding the study rated to be of lowest quality.

What we found and what does this mean:

We found that VCP was worse than face-to-face delivery for developing a working alliance, but no poorer for reducing target symptoms. This means that, despite poorer ratings of working alliance, the outcome-effectiveness of VCP is not worse than that of face-to-face delivery. The findings for alliance versus outcome could reflect limitations in our ability to understand and measure working alliance in the context of VCP (as compared with face-to-face delivery).

What next:

More high quality research is needed to investigate the phenomenon of the working alliance in VCP, or else identify other compensatory processes which mean an inferior working alliance does not negatively influence outcome. Informed by these results, a research project is currently underway investigating the working alliance as a change process in VCP.

Evidence:

Norwood C, Moghaddam NG, Malins S, Sabin-Farrell R. Working alliance and outcome effectiveness in videoconferencing psychotherapy: A systematic review and noninferiority meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology & Psychotherapy*. 2018. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/cpp.2315>

What is NIHR CLAHRC EM?

NIHR Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care (CLAHRCs) are collaborations between the NHS, universities and local organisations. Our goals are to conduct applied health research across the East Midlands and translate our research findings into improved outcomes for the public.

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