



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Computers in Human Behavior

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/comphumbeh](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/comphumbeh)



# Psychologist treatment recommendations for Internet-based therapeutic interventions

Louis Mora \*, Jeffrey Nevid, William Chaplin

Department of Psychology, St. John's University, 8000 Utopia Parkway, Queens, NY, 11439, USA

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Available online 3 July 2008

#### Keywords:

Online therapy  
Internet  
Psychotherapy  
Psychologist

### ABSTRACT

A mailed survey was used to evaluate psychologists' endorsements of four Internet-based treatment modalities (e-mail, individual chat, group chat, and video conferencing) as either adjunctive or alternative forms of treatment. Participants were 138 psychologists recruited from a state psychological organization's membership directory. Participants provided endorsements for each Internet-based intervention based on a hypothetical case in which past treatment history was manipulated in a randomized design. Overall, psychologists provided low levels of endorsement of Internet-based services; however, significantly higher levels of endorsement were found for a case vignette that lacked any mention of past treatment history as compared to an otherwise identical case that mentioned previous treatment for major depression. Additionally, participants provided higher endorsements for e-mail applications than other modalities and cognitive-behaviorally-oriented practitioners more strongly endorsed the use of Internet-based interventions than psychoanalytically-oriented practitioners.

© 2008 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

The Internet is a transforming technology in contemporary society, changing everything from making travel reservations and ordering concert tickets to accessing medical and psychological sources of information to social networking. The Internet is also increasingly used to provide various psychological interventions, including online counseling and therapy services. As online psychological interventions proliferate, so too do controversies concerning their use.

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 718 690 1232; fax: +1 718 990 6705.  
E-mail address: [louis.mora04@stjohns.edu](mailto:louis.mora04@stjohns.edu) (L. Mora).

One source of controversy is that mental health professionals, including psychologists, are licensed in particular states, whereas the reach of the Internet extends beyond state and even international boundaries. Moreover, ethical and liability issues may arise in the context of psychologists and other helping professionals providing services to clients they never meet in person and whose identity may be difficult to verify (Ragusea & VandeCreek, 2003). Many uses of the Internet limit communication to typed input, which precludes therapists from evaluating nonverbal cues and gestures that may be reflective of patients' underlying psychological concerns. Another concern is that online therapists may live at great distances from clients they treat and so may not be readily available or accessible in emergency or crisis situations.

Although many challenges facing adoption of online psychological interventions remain, there is an increasing recognition within the professional community that Internet-based services can have therapeutic value and may require fewer therapist resources than standard face-to-face approaches (Chang & Yeh, 2003; Litz, Williams, Wang, Bryant, & Engel, 2004; Taylor & Luce, 2003). Internet-based services may also be able to reach many clients who hesitate to contact helping professionals or who live in remote areas in which therapist availability is scarce.

Some professionals argue that Internet-based interventions should be used only as an adjunct to face-to-face psychotherapy (Maheu & Gordon, 2000; Murdoch & Connor-Greene, 2000). Others argue that stand-alone Internet-based interventions can yield positive outcomes (Chang & Yeh, 2003; Cook & Doyle, 2002). Psychologists and other helping professionals are presently seeking more responsible ways of integrating the Internet and other forms of psychotechnology into contemporary clinical and counseling practice (Comas-Diaz, 2006). Professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association (American Counseling Association, 2002) and the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2002) have also begun to address ethical and legal issues regarding these treatments. Although outcome research on Internet-based psychological interventions remains in its infancy, evidence has begun to accumulate that supports the therapeutic benefits of these approaches in the treatment of a diverse range of problems including posttraumatic stress disorder, panic disorder, social phobia, smoking cessation, weight management, insomnia, and childhood encoyresis (Andersson et al., 2006; Carlbring et al., 2006; Litz et al., 2004; Ritterband et al., 2003; Ström, Pettersson, & Andersson, 2004; Tate, Wing, & Winett, 2001; Walters, Wright, & Shegog, 2006).

### *1.1. Internet-based treatment modalities*

Internet-based interventions include such modalities as electronic mail (e-mail), video conferencing, message boards, and chat rooms. E-mail is the most widely used electronic communication modality between patients and health care providers (Castelnuovo, Gaggioli, Mantovani, & Riva, 2003; Manhal-Baugus, 2001). It allows for asynchronous communication; that is, communication not occurring simultaneously in real time. Murdoch and Connor-Greene (2000) described using e-mail to communicate with patients as an adjunct to face-to-face treatment, which included having a depressed patient e-mail homework assignments to the therapist. Yager (2001) reported using e-mail communications with patients as an adjunctive treatment for eating disorders.

Message boards are also used for the delivery of psychotherapeutic services over the Internet. With this modality, patients and therapists communicate asynchronously by posting messages to each other on a message board via a secure website. Chang and Yeh (2003) argued that this modality can serve either as an adjunct to face-to-face therapy or as an alternative for individuals who may not feel comfortable receiving services in person.

Message boards and e-mail represent asynchronous forms of communication via the Internet, whereas, chatting is a synchronous form of communication. Chatting is the most prevalent form of synchronous communication between patients and mental health professionals (Castelnuovo et al., 2003). Communication can occur in a chat room via a secure website or by using instant messaging services. Rhodes (2004) evaluated the use of a chat room intervention for men who have sex with men in which the therapist moderated conversations regarding HIV prevention; however, lack of a control group precluded any determination of therapeutic effectiveness.

Like Internet-based chat, video conferencing occurs synchronously and requires scheduling appointments in advance (Ellevan & Allen, 2004). Currently, most online psychiatric services are

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/351459>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/351459>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)