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**Abstract**

Although telepsychiatry in the form of videoconferencing has been well received in terms of increasing access to care and user satisfaction, few data on treatment outcomes and efficacy from telepsychiatry applications are available at the present time. This paper evaluates the efficacy of telepsychiatry through videoconference in the treatment of mental disorders by comparing to face-to-face conventional (F2FC) treatment. We carried out a randomized clinical trial where 140 psychiatric outpatients were randomized to either F2FC treatment or videoconference telepsychiatry (VCTP) treatment. Patients were diagnosed according to International Classification of Diseases, 10th edition (ICD-10) criteria using the Composite International Diagnostic Interview. Treatment involves eight consultations lasting 30 minutes over the 24-week study period. Patients received pertinent psychotropic medication plus cognitive-behavioral therapy during sessions. The same psychiatrist diagnosed and treated all the patients that were recruited from the Community Mental Health Centre of San Sebastian de la Gomera, in the Canary Islands. Change in psychiatric test scores served as the primary efficacy criterion. Efficacy was determined by comparing baseline (visit 1) Clinical Global Impressions-Severity of Illness (CGI-S) and -Improvement (CGI-I) scales as well as Global Indexes (GSI, PSDI, and PST) from SCL-90R with scores obtained at the end of the study period (week 24). Response was defined as a CGI-I score of 1 or 2. Reliable Change Indexes were computed in SCL-90R Global Indexes scores. Of 140 patients randomized, 130 completed 24 weeks of treatment. Only 4 patients dropped out prematurely from the study in VCTP and 6 in F2FC. The study involves 534 teleconsultations, 522 F2FC consultations, and more than 500 hours of clinical practice. Significant improvements were found on the CGI and SCL-90-R Global Indexes scores of both treatment groups, showing clear clinical state improvement. No statistically significant differences were observed when the efficacy of VCTP treatment was compared to F2FC psychiatric treatment efficacy. This study demonstrated that telepsychiatry treatment through videoconference has equivalent efficacy to F2FC psychiatric treatment. Telepsychiatry showed to be an effective mean of delivering mental health services to psychiatric outpatients living in remote areas with limited resources.

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