Can Internet technologies be of therapeutic value to psychologists who work with children and adolescents?

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The Plan

- Context
- Rationale
- Aims
- Findings
- Conclusions

Method
**Context**

- Young people are using Internet technologies more than ever before (Office for National Statistics, 2013).

- Increasing pressures on limited NHS resources creates a need and an incentive for providers to develop new ways of delivering care and support (Mental Health Network NHS Confederation, 2013).

- Advances in Internet-based mobile digital information and communication technologies for mental health are developing at an exponential rate (Department of Health, 2013).

- Collectively offer the potential to transform healthcare delivery by increasing access to information and services, as well as providing opportunities for individuals to exercise more choice in managing their own wellbeing (Department of Health, 2013).
A growing evidence base highlights the value of using technological advances to increase the reach, effectiveness and utility of psychological interventions for young people (Collin et al., 2011).

In particular, videoconferencing and mobile applications (apps) will play a major role in future service delivery (Boydell et al., 2014).

Current mental health strategy in the United Kingdom (UK) recommends the increased use of ITs to improve quality of care and access to services (Department of Health, 2011).

Yet despite the wealth of resources available and the documented encouragement for their use within mental health service provision (Mental Health Network NHS Confederation, 2013), there is reported resistance to embracing technology among professionals within the therapeutic context (Christensen et al., 2011; Dauphin, 2013) and much variability in the use of ITs across services.
**Research Questions/Aims**

- Get a sense of current experiences of CPs in the UK
- What do they think about the role of ITs within current service provision?
- Can they be of therapeutic value?
- What are CPs opinions about the benefits and risks of using ITs in practice?
- Contribute to a timely clinically relevant conversation
Method

- Qualitative approach in exploratory study
- Participants recruited online though stakeholder email lists and the NW Psychology Professions Network
- Not restricted to a particular Trust or service
- Interviews offered in person, over the phone or skype
- Audio recorded and transcribed
- Thematic analysis applied to the data
Ten Participants
all female qualified CPs employed in NHS context

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Inpatient
- Child Dev/LD

Legend:
- Promotes Use/Dev
- Regularly Uses
- Did not use
Findings

Theme 1: Utility in Clinical Practice
- Therapeutic risks of using IT
- Supporting clinicians
- Therapeutic benefits of using IT

Theme 2: A Chicken and Egg Problem in Service Delivery
- Contrasting clinical and managerial priorities
- Short term outlook in long term service provision

Theme 3: The Future of ITs in Services
- Anyone can advocate for ITs
- Services can be made more person centred
- Social media as a new frontier

Current Situation

Future
Themes

The Future of ITs in Services

The Chicken and Egg Problem

Clinical Utility

Benefits

Risks
Types of IT experienced

- Using online resources/websites in an outside of sessions
- Email/Apps
- Social network sites/online forums for service users
- Social network sites/online forums for professionals
- cCBT/self-guided online programmes
- Video-conferencing technologies
- Service specific websites that are accessible to young people
- Online Portal for young people to access their own notes/resources/care plan
- More about access then a choice not to use technologies
Therapeutic Benefits of IT

- Enhances service user engagement with therapeutic process
- Enhances accessibility of therapeutic ideas & concepts
- Promotes service user ownership and involvement in therapy
- Provides the option of less stigmatising, out of hours support
- Apps/email provide service users with more convenient and interactive methods of self-monitoring
- cCBT/self-guided online resources/portal could increase the personalisation of services to service users level of need, and preferences for the way they access support
- Videoconferencing may be used to overcome geographical and other such barriers, like immune comprising illnesses, to accessing services and professional support
Therapeutic Risks

- ITs are not more accessible for everybody!
- Risk of disengagement if IT is offered as a routine step for everyone “families might feel fobbed off” (Sarah)
- Risk of disrupting the flow of therapy when ITs don’t work reliably
- Risk of being “too reductionist” (Hannah) giving the impression that difficulties exist in isolation
- Risk of online forms of communicating blurring therapeutic boundaries
Strengths and Limitations

🎉 Got a broad understanding of clinician’s experiences, expectations and hopes.

🎉 All were pretty positive – potential bias in recruitment strategy?

🎉 Not enough demographic collected to consider age effects
Conclusions & Recommendations

- Participants felt IT is/could be therapeutically valuable!
- These need to be introduced in a meaningful client centered ways with the use of clinical judgment
- Risks of burdening clinicians & disengaging service users if introducing IT from solely cost-effective perspectives
- Services would benefit from consistent access to Internet & the resources to use this effectively with young people
- Trusts can support the integration of ITs with clear policies and protocols around managing ethical considerations
References


That's all Folks!