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**Usefulness of telepsychiatry: A critical evaluation of videoconferencing-based approaches**

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#### Abstract

Telepsychiatry, *i.e.*, the use of information and communication technologies to provide psychiatric services from a distance, has been around for more than half a century now. Research over this period has shown that videoconferencing-based telepsychiatry is an enabling and empowering form of service delivery, which promotes equality of access, and high levels of satisfaction among patients. The range of services offered by videoconferencing-based telepsychiatry, potential users and points of delivery of such services are theoretically limitless. Telepsychiatry has both clinical utility and non-clinical uses such as administrative, learning and research applications. A large body of accumulated evidence indicates that videoconferencing-based telepsychiatric assessments are reliable, and clinical outcomes of telepsychiatric interventions are comparable to conventional treatment among diverse patient populations, ages and diagnostic groups, and on a wide range of measures. However, on many aspects of effectiveness, the evidence base is still relatively limited and often compromised by methodological problems. The lack of cost-effectiveness data in particular, is a major hindrance, raising doubts about the continued viability of telepsychiatric services.

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