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Mental Health Professionals' Network

# WEBINAR

## Tips and strategies in using technology for mental health consultations

# Webinar partnership

## Webinar partnership

This webinar is produced by the Mental Health Professionals' Network, on behalf of the Victorian and Tasmanian PHN Alliance.



# Panellists



**Dr Monica Moore**  
GP and Psychotherapist



**Mr David Xuereb**  
Psychologist



**Ms Tessa Moriarty**  
Mental Health Nurse



**Professor Mark Creamer**  
Clinical Psychologist



# Platform updates

You may have noticed the webinar room looks a little different: we've had an upgrade.

To access all your usual interactivity and resources, hover over the colourful icons to the top right of your screen:



Open the chat box



Access resources including the panel bios and supporting resources document



Open the feedback survey



# Learning outcomes

Through a facilitated panel discussion at the completion of the webinar participants will have:

- Improved awareness of the opportunities, challenges and risks in conducting mental health consultations by telephone and/or videoconferencing
- Practical tips and strategies which support good outcomes (for the practitioner and the client) for telephone and/or videoconferencing mental health consultations
- Increased confidence in using telephone and/or videoconferencing to establish and/or maintain the therapeutic relationship with your client/s.



# A GP's perspective



Dr Monica Moore  
GP and Psychotherapist



# A GP's perspective

## Opportunities and benefits

- Some patients prefer it
- Improved access – (remote, RACF, poor mobility)
- Access to GP and specialists
- Efficiency for GP and patient – GP sees only those who need to be seen
- Remunerated for all work
- Environmental – less pollution and accidents
- 'Work from home' benefits



Dr Monica Moore  
GP and Psychotherapist



# A GP's perspective

## Challenges and risks

- Patient: diagnosis, privacy, access, distress
- Clinician: zoom fatigue: e.g. 'the constant presence of each other's absence', missing information
- Technical – poor connection, not encrypted



Dr Monica Moore  
GP and Psychotherapist





# A GP's perspective

## Practical tips

- Send suggestions for connection and comfort, and a consent form to patient before appointment
- Keep your phone handy – in case you need to use both simultaneously
- Have a crisis plan: two contact people and phone numbers for safety
- Technical: work clothes, camera high, neutral background (not fake) (YouTube tips)



Dr Monica Moore  
GP and Psychotherapist



# A GP's perspective

## Apps and online resources

- Calm
- Headspace
- Insight timer
- Calm harm
- Worry time
- Head to health
- Centre for clinical interventions
- This Way Up



Dr Monica Moore  
GP and Psychotherapist



# A Psychologist's perspective

## For clients in regional areas

- Can have poor access to services. Services like [infoxchange.org.au](http://infoxchange.org.au) or local councils may help.
- Some clients experiencing social isolation or loneliness in telephone sessions can fall into a monologue.
- Clients who lack informal supports (friends etc.) tend to have difficulties negotiating relationships.



Mr David Xuereb  
Psychologist



# A Psychologist's perspective

## Practical and clinical tips

- For telephone sessions, regular “yes”, “uh uh” etc. (replacing the nod) while client responds.
- For telephone sessions particularly, where possible, emphasizing intonation as you speak.
- Email any scanned material for sessions a few hours or preferably day prior to session.



Mr David Xuereb  
Psychologist



# A Psychologist's perspective

## Practical and clinical tips continued ...

- More regular reviews of progress using for example K10 and reviews of therapeutic goals in the case that visual cues normally available through face to face are missed.
- If using a laptop or desktop computer, try minimizing the window and place near your camera.
- Video platforms use up more battery power than phone calls, have laptop and phone handy.



Mr David Xuereb  
Psychologist



# A Psychologist's perspective

## Expectations of a telecounselling session may be different to face-to-face sessions

- Telecounselling may sometimes result in reduced work that can be covered in a given amount of time. (drop outs in connection, poor bandwidth affecting video, technical difficulties that take time to resolve etc.).
- Extra time may be required to establish therapeutic alliance e.g. Psychoeducation, socialization to treatment.

Deprived of visual information such as body language and facial expression when using a telephone, checking in more often may help e.g. “does that make sense to you?”, “how do you feel about that?”



Mr David Xuereb  
Psychologist



# A Psychologist's perspective

## Possible benefits of telecounselling that may not be afforded by face-to-face counselling

- Mildly depersonalized effect on the session may result in a greater willingness of disclosure for first time clients.
- Currently and perhaps in a post pandemic world, we can begin necessary short follow ups using video?
- Telecounselling clients with agoraphobia always made sense, why not client with mobility or other issues?



Mr David Xuereb  
Psychologist



# A mental health nurse's perspective

## Opportunities

- Time efficient/cost effective
- Doesn't rely on joint location - provide service, connect with and reach clients/professionals across region/state/country

## Challenges

- Platform availability and connection issues
- Perception and fear (from both clients and professionals) – face-to-face is somehow better



Ms Tessa Moriarty  
Mental Health Nurse





# A mental health nurse's perspective

## Risks

- Connection issues
- Managing a crisis

## Boundary Issues

- Home is work
- Tempting to “relax”
- Clients and professionals want to know more about you



Ms Tessa Moriarty  
Mental Health Nurse



# A mental health nurse's perspective

## Platform availability and connection issues

Always have a planned back-up that everyone has access to and knows about in advance  
Mobile/landline phone as first and back-up option

## Perception and fear (professionals and clients) that F2F is somehow better

It's different and it means service is delivered where it otherwise wouldn't be  
We all get used to it – give it time for you and client/others to be comfortable with using it

## Managing a crisis

The same as F2F – Advance safety plans  
Manage in same way you would if you were physically at the location/best way you can.  
Debrief for you and for client/others  
Supervision



Ms Tessa Moriarty  
Mental Health Nurse

# A mental health nurse's perspective

## Boundary Issues/Home is Work

Client/Other wants to know more about you

- Be human and be professional (boundaries are the same, context is different)
- Take care of and pay attention to all the details you normally would

## Working Well From Home

- Work-Space/Environment
- Tidy, organized space/area, with no or minimal interruptions/distractions
- Prepare in advance (platform is ready, phone is charged, headphones work, water on your desk, window open/fresh air, protected work time)



Ms Tessa Moriarty  
Mental Health Nurse



# Questions and answers



Dr Monica Moore  
GP and Psychotherapist



Mr David Xuereb  
Psychologist



Ms Tessa Moriarty  
Mental Health Nurse



Professor Mark Creamer  
Clinical Psychologist



# Supporting resources

For access to resources recommended by the panellists, you can view the supporting resources document in the documents tab at the bottom right of the screen.



# Thank you

- Please ensure you complete the feedback survey before you log out.
- Click the Feedback Survey tab at the top of the screen to open the survey.
- Your Statement of Attendance will be emailed to you within four weeks.
- You will receive an email with a link to online resources associated with this webinar in the next few weeks.





# Join an MHPN Network

Did you know MHPN runs 373 face-to-face networks around the country?

Visit our online map to find which networks are close to you:

[www.mhpn.org.au/find-network](http://www.mhpn.org.au/find-network)



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THANK YOU  
FOR ATTENDING