

Mental health support via video

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Much has been said about the difficulty providing quality health services to people in rural and remote communities and tele-medicine is rapidly evolving to meet the need. As part of the tele-medicine revolution, video counselling (e.g. via Skype) is now emerging as the next important step in providing mental health support.

Over the past 50 years, remote mental health services have primarily been the domain of telephone 'helplines.' While the effectiveness of telephonic counselling has been demonstrated, there is a common perception amongst the public and health providers alike that telephone counselling services are a 'last resort' for people in extreme crisis. However, as a hybrid form of delivery with elements of both ongoing face-to-face and telephone services, video counselling is changing the way in which we think about mental health support.

Video counselling offers a solution for people unable to access on the ground services due to geographical challenges or other access issues. Video counselling also attracts clients who may not otherwise use telephone or face to face services, such as younger people.

As a leader in remote service delivery, On the Line has introduced video counselling into two of its national professional counselling services: MensLine Australia and the Suicide Call Back Service. Both services now offer 24/7 high-level professional support via video to some of the most isolated in our community.

The presentation aims to improve participants' understanding of the implications of video counselling in supporting people in rural and remote areas. It will demonstrate how On the Line operates video services and responds to some of the practice, privacy and other concerns that have been raised. Case studies will be presented highlighting how the service supports people in rural and remote areas

The future holds many new forms of digital communications. It is expected that online communications will continue to grow, and that online therapies will form an important aspect of future service delivery. While video services still present a number of challenges, service providers need to embrace new communication channels.