

The use of mobile technologies in and for psychotherapy



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The proliferation of mobile technologies into people's daily lives has led to profound changes in the way we communicate and learn, and increasingly in the way people take care of their physical and mental health. Over the past decade, a large number of web- and mobile-based psychological interventions for a broad variety of mental disorders have been developed and tested in randomized controlled trials. These interventions range from fully automated self-help programs on the one hand, to therapies provided by trained therapists through email or videoconference on the other hand. Empirical evidence shows that these different kinds of interventions are (cost-)effective. These new developments challenge traditional therapeutic formats and offer new opportunities, especially for "hard-to-reach" populations. Mobile technologies can be integrated into traditional face-to-face therapy, but careful consideration of relevant issues such as data protection and use of safe communication channels is needed. In addition, building a trustful relationship over the internet requires specific skills.

The objective of the workshop will be to outline the challenges and opportunities posed by the digital revolution in the management of mental health conditions. Issues related to the automation of interventions, the role of the therapeutic alliance, treatment adherence and ethical issues will be addressed. In addition, participants will get familiar with the Swiss quality standards for online interventions developed by the Swiss Federation of Psychologists (FSP). Practical examples of automated interventions and with writing e-mails or chat messages will be included in the workshop.

Eva Heim is a trained psychotherapist and senior researcher at the division of Psychopathology and Psychological Intervention at University of Zurich's Department of Psychology. She has contributed to research on different online interventions, e.g. a fully automated program for the treatment of insomnia in Switzerland and Germany, or a guided internet-based intervention for the treatment of depression among culturally diverse groups (e.g., Syrian refugees, Albanian-speaking immigrants in Switzerland and Germany). In addition, she has worked as an online therapist in routine care at University of Zurich's psychotherapeutic outpatient clinic, and she was part of the working group for the development of the "Quality standards online interventions for psychotherapy practitioners" by the Swiss Federation of Psychologists (FSP).

Literature :

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