

The Effectiveness of EMDR Therapy delivered via an e-health platform

Oral Presentation

Outline

To present the effectiveness of a specific application of EMDR Therapy utilising a remotely controlled software program (REMDR) that allows the therapist to utilise telehealth to deliver EMDR Therapy to a client in a remote location.

EMDR Therapists cannot be everywhere. If they can provide immediate intervention, then there is a much greater opportunity to prevent mental health problems from developing.

Due to the nature of the administration, traditional schools of thought would consider that it is not possible to deliver EMDR Therapy from a remote location, as the role of the therapist in effectively monitoring and managing the outcomes of the process, is critical to achieving effective outcomes.

As an effective EMDR therapist and psychologist with an interest in emerging technologies, the author sought to find a solution to this perceived barrier to effective therapeutic delivery via an e-Health platform.

Learning Objectives

Environment - In delivering services remotely, there are some key concerns that need to be addressed with the client to ensure therapeutic effectiveness. In essence, the clients 'in office' experience needs to be mimicked as closely as possible to their 'at home' experience, so preparation is key.

The author has engaged with a number of clients, in a variety of settings, utilising an online environment. Consistently, those clients who try and engage with online therapy from an environment that is not conducive to enhancing focus (when they are at work or have young children around), find that their outcomes from that session are not as effective.

Preparation and awareness of the client's ability to stabilise themselves is important – as sometimes technology is not as 'effective' as we would hope. On occasion, the call may drop or freeze, and the client has to be aware enough to be able to stabilise until the call can reconnect. This is where the Preparation (Phase 2 & 3) for EMDR Therapy is critical, there needs to be some awareness of the client's ability to stabilise themselves (self-management).

Timeliness - A traumatic incident has approximately a six-hour window before the neural networks consolidate around the memory, and up to three weeks until it is solidified and processed within the brain. If we can intervene early, then we are able to resolve an issue before it develops into a more serious mental health problem.

Effectiveness - The software (REMDR) was designed to allow the EMDR therapist to administer EMDR Therapy to any client in the same way as they would if that client was in their office. There is strong evidence that psychological therapy can be delivered effectively through an online environment, including EMDR Therapy.

Innovation

Research trials have shown that online therapy has been found to be as effective in reducing symptoms, as therapy delivered face-to-face by a clinician. Evidence is particularly strong for the effectiveness of treatment for anxiety, stress and depression. In addition, online therapy allows the client to maintain and build a satisfactory rapport with their therapist, in the same way they would through face-to-face treatment.

Results indicate that there is no significant difference between the outcomes obtained from each EMDR Therapy session delivered 'online' or a face-to-face mode of delivery. The author has demonstrated that the use on an online EMDR Therapy tool can be just as effective as working with a client face-to-face.