

Provider Barriers to Telemental Health: Obstacles Overcome, Obstacles Remaining

Many providers still have not embraced telemental health (TMH). Providers cite several reasons for their reluctance to provide TMH including the inconvenience of using the equipment and challenges with reimbursement. This article discussed recent improvements that address personal, technology related, and reimbursement barriers. Today there are more opportunities for providers to participate in TMH trainings, and there is more evidence supporting TMH as an effective treatment modality. Changes in technology have led to greater transmission quality and provider convenience. There are still opportunities to increase TMH utilization though. To overcome personal barriers the authors suggest greater use of desktop video conferencing capabilities which would allow the provider to stay in the same room where they see patients in-person or provide services from home. There has been more evidence in the last 15 years demonstrating that TMH outcomes are comparable to traditional mental health treatment, but those outcomes need to be more widely disseminated to improve the provider's perception. The authors also recommend more studies on TMH as in 2011 approximately 78% of clinicians responded that more research was needed. There is a need for state level Medicaid and third party payer reform as some payers do not reimburse for TMH or only reimburse certain procedures. It is also believed that eventual integration of conferencing capabilities with electronic health records, and the increased use of tablet devices will encourage greater TMH adoption. *Citation:* Brooks, E., Turvey, C., Augusterfer, E.F., (2013). A discussion of solutions to remove barriers that inhibit greater adoption of telemental health care. *Telemedicine and e-Health*, 19, no. 6 (2013): 102-110. Available: <http://online.liebertpub.com/doi/pdf/10.1089/tmj.2013.0068> . ♦

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Did You Know?

- In 2011, 78% of clinicians surveyed responded that more research on the effectiveness of telehealth was needed.
- Firms are developing ways to add conferencing capabilities to electronic medical record platforms.
- Recent studies have demonstrated high patient satisfaction with telemental health services and comparable results. ♦



Helping Policy-Makers Address Rural Health Access Problems

This article from the Australian Journal of Rural Health discusses a framework for policy makers to evaluate how policy addresses primary care access issues. The framework divides access into several areas including availability, geography, affordability, accommodation, timeliness, acceptability, and awareness. To address access, policy makers should evaluate each component of health care access and identify access gaps. Attempts to improve health care access should be comprehensive to effectively combat inequities in access to primary health care. The authors contend it is not enough to address health care access on the supply side only, but policy should also address health care demand. They found that most efforts to improve availability focused on growing infrastructure, and hiring personnel as opposed to shaping primary care demand or increasing productivity. Their research demonstrated that most efforts to address geographical issues focused on bringing providers closer to the rural populations or further adoption of telehealth technologies. The authors suggested that policy should also address increasing mobility for these rural patients otherwise some may not even be able to travel to proximate clinics. They also recommended that policy makers should focus population characteristics when addressing access challenges. *Citation:* Russell, D. J., Humphreys, J.S., Ward, B., Chisholm, M., Buykx, P., McGrail, M., Wakerman, J., (2013). A comprehensive review of the dimensions of health care access. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*. (online) 2013. Available: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/ajr.12023/abstract>. ♦

