

Telesupervision: Effective Clinical Supervision

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Objectives

- Participants will understand the research base of telesupervision
- Participants will learn effective telesupervision strategies
- Participants will understand strengths and potential barriers to effective telesupervision and how to address barriers

Clinical supervision

- Clinical supervision is a core competency area within the counseling field and essential to our development of competent clinicians (Bernard & Goodyear, 2019)
- Much attention is given to the face-to-face format of clinical supervision delivery (Perry, 2012)

What is telesupervision?

- Non in-person interactions between supervisors and supervisees over an electronic medium
- A process whereby distant supervision is provided using electronic information and communication technologies (Chipchase et al., 2014)

Why telesupervision?

- Removes time and space restrictions
- Cost-effective
- Greater access to qualified supervisors
- In mid-March 2020, many behavioral health agencies began mitigation strategies to contain the spread of COVID-19
- As part of mitigation strategies, many clinicians began telework

Is telesupervision effective?

- Telesupervision is perceived to have equal overall quality to in-person supervision with additional benefits including improved flexibility and increased accessibility of training (Jordan & Shearer, 2019).
- In a comparison of modes of communication during team meetings (face-to-face vs. virtual), there were no differences among the decision-making quality, creativity, group development, or satisfaction of the process (Greene et al., 2010).

Is telesupervision effective? Cont'd.

Provides opportunities to continue with didactic training and group feedback as the supervisor and supervisee are able to read each other's facial cues and emotional responses in addition to providing experiential learning exercises, such as role-play (Abbass, 2011; Jordan & Shearer, 2019; Markefka et al., 2020)

What are the benefits of telesupervision?

- Improved efficiency in exchanging information
- Improved efficiency in making decisions
- Supervisor development
- Experiential and didactic activities

Denstadli et al., 2011

Telesupervision: Action research

30 students in Queensland, Australia

Various contexts (e.g. metropolitan city, regional city, rural town)

Students reported satisfaction with process when small ratios used (1:4)

Limitations: low bandwidth, unreliable connectivity

Chipchase et al., 2014

What is needed for effective telesupervision?

Protocols need to be developed including:

- Instructions for setting up the platform
- Testing the platform in advance
- Confidentiality requirements
- Professionalism practices
- Contingency plan to manage challenges (e.g. technical challenges)

Marhefka et al., 2020

Adapting to Telesupervision

“Initially it was a little bit – it was a little bit weird....so the normal interactions that you might have with an educator who’s in there with you at the same time were suddenly a bit different, but we got used to it”

- Clinician participating in research study in Queensland, Australia

Challenges learning technical skills without the clinical supervisor physically present

Chipchase et al., 2014

Challenges while engaging in telesupervision

- Scheduling
- Technology difficulty
- Difficulty in accessing nonverbal communication
- Differences in setting
- New supervisor anxiety
- Supervisee attitudes toward supervision

Inman et al., 2018

Supervisor benefits of telesupervision

- Exposure to diverse culture and work setting
- Flexibility
- Supervisor development
- Positive impact on the field and supervisee from afar
- Stay current with the field to include technology and ethical standards

Inman et al., 2018

Supervisee benefits of telesupervision

- Access to quality supervision
- Exposure to diverse perspective
- Flexibility
- Supervisee development

Inman et al., 2018

Ethical concerns

- Confidentiality
- Differences in ethical codes, laws, and rules in international setting
- Dual roles
- Supervisee not having access to resources

Inman et al., 2018

Working alliance in face-to-face supervision

- Nonverbal communication impacting rapport
- Supervisee characteristics
- Supervisor approach
- Absence of technical barriers
- Familiarity with setting

Inman et al., 2018

Working alliance in telesupervision

- Attitudes and approach towards supervision
- Addressing challenges regarding telesupervision
- Supervisor multicultural competence
- Anxiety about technology

Inman et al., 2018

Factors that influence the quality and effectiveness of telesupervision

- Supervisee characteristics
- Supervisor characteristics
- Supervision characteristics
- Supervisory relationship
- Communication strategies
- Prior face-to-face contact
- Environmental factors
- Technological considerations

Martin et al., 2017

Supervisee characteristics

- Clinical practice experience
- Flexible
- Pragmatic
- Reflective
- Committed
- Relaxed
- Willing to rely on others when visual cues are absent

Supervisor characteristics

- Experience of the context of isolated rural practices in order to provide support that is relevant/credible
- A site coordinator if group supervision is provided
- Role of coordinator is to send meeting agenda, facilitate discussions

Supervision characteristics, Cont'd.

- Structured sessions
- Use of supervision minutes and agenda
- Match level of supervision to supervisee's competence
- Clear contractual expectations with a level of flexibility
- Preparation (e.g. construct meeting agenda, test equipment, etc.)

Supervisory relationship

- Working alliance is crucial
- Immediacy of relationship
- Continuity of supervisor availability

Communication strategies

- Adopt a communication style that involves using a more formal, slower speaking style
- Speak in longer blocks of dialogue
- Jot down spontaneous comments during longer speech blocks to avoid interrupting flow of speech
- Disciplined turn taking
- E-mailing written material to the supervisor prior to supervision
- Effective use of silence

Prior face-to-face contact

- Enhances the telesupervision partnership
- Helps if the trusting relationship has already been established
- More frequent contact at early stages of telesupervision recommended when prior face-to-face contact is not possible

Environmental factors

- Quiet space
- Access to a phone and computer
- Soundproof room
- Minimal distractions

Technological considerations

- Background noise
- Auditory distractions
- Audio lags
- Use of old equipment

In Summary....

- Telesupervision can be an effective means to deliver ethical and effective supervision
- There are both benefits and challenges to telesupervision
- Both the supervisor and supervisee should understand factors that influence the quality and effectiveness of telesupervision

Questions?

Thank you for your time!

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Additional Resource

<https://www.samhsa.gov/practitioner-training>