

Telehealth: Optimizing Child and Trauma Mental Health

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Abstract

Telehealth offers a critical solution for enhancing mental health care accessibility, particularly for trauma survivors and pediatric populations. Studies show virtual delivery of psychotherapy and trauma-focused interventions like TF-CBT is effective, often comparable to in-person care. It overcomes barriers like geography and stigma, playing a vital role in child maltreatment prevention and intervention. While improving continuity of care and expanding reach, challenges in implementation, privacy, and the need for adapted, trauma-informed approaches remain. Further research is essential to optimize telehealth for diverse populations and specific contexts.

Keywords

Telehealth; Mental Health; Trauma; Child Maltreatment; Adolescents; Psychotherapy; Virtual Care; Accessibility; Pediatric; COVID-19

Introduction

Telehealth for Survivors of Trauma and Abuse: A Rapid Systematic Review. This review synthesizes findings on telehealth use for trauma and abuse survivors, highlighting its potential to increase access and reduce barriers to care, especially for vulnerable populations like adolescents. It discusses the efficacy across various trauma types, treatment modalities, and platforms, noting the need for adapted, trauma-informed approaches in virtual settings to ensure safety and engagement [1].

Telehealth for Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy: A Systematic Review. This systematic review explores the effectiveness of telehealth for delivering psychotherapy to children and adoles-

cents. It identifies various modalities, including CBT and family therapy, adaptable for virtual platforms, demonstrating comparable outcomes to in-person care for many conditions. The article underscores telehealth's role in improving accessibility, particularly for youth in remote areas or facing mobility challenges, while also addressing implementation challenges and research gaps [2].

Telehealth and child maltreatment: a rapid review. This rapid review examines the application of telehealth in contexts of child maltreatment, covering both prevention and intervention. It highlights how virtual platforms can facilitate remote assessments, therapy, and support services for children and families affected by abuse, emphasizing the need for careful consideration of privacy, engagement, and the digital divide to ensure equitable and effective care [3].

Telehealth-Delivered Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy to Address Child Maltreatment: A Narrative Review. This narrative review focuses on the use of telehealth to deliver Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) for child maltreatment. It suggests that virtual TF-CBT can be an effective and

accessible treatment modality, particularly in situations where in-person therapy is challenging. The review discusses adaptations necessary for telehealth delivery and points to promising outcomes for reducing trauma symptoms in children and adolescents [4].

Remote forensic medical examinations for victims of sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A mixed-methods study. This mixed-methods study explores the implementation and experiences of remote forensic medical examinations for sexual violence victims during the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the potential for telehealth solutions to maintain continuity of care in challenging circumstances, discussing both the benefits of remote consultation and the limitations, particularly regarding evidence collection and the need for in-person components in forensic evaluations [5].

The Use of Telehealth to Deliver Trauma-Focused Psychotherapy: A Systematic Review. This systematic review investigates the use of telehealth for delivering trauma-focused psychotherapy. It reveals that virtual delivery of evidence-based trauma treatments, such as CBT, can be as effective as in-person therapy for various trauma populations. The review underscores telehealth's role in expanding access to specialized care, particularly important for individuals who might otherwise face barriers due to geography, stigma, or scheduling conflicts [6].

Telehealth Approaches in Pediatric Mental Health: A Systematic Review of Treatment Modalities, Effectiveness, and Implementational Factors. This systematic review evaluates various telehealth approaches in pediatric mental health, covering different treatment modalities, their effectiveness, and key implementational factors. It highlights the growing evidence base for telehealth interventions in treating child and adolescent mental health conditions, including anxiety and trauma-related disorders, noting the critical importance of technological accessibility, training for providers, and parental involvement for successful integration [7].

Telehealth for Child Maltreatment: A Systematic Review of Interventions for Treatment and Prevention. This systematic review focuses on telehealth interventions for child maltreatment, examining both treatment and prevention strategies. It consolidates evidence supporting the use of virtual platforms to deliver mental health services, parent training, and preventative education, emphasizing telehealth's capacity to overcome barriers to care for families affected by abuse while calling for further research on long-term efficacy and specific populations [8].

Rapid Review of Telemental Health in Pediatric Settings. This rapid review synthesizes current evidence on telemental health services in pediatric settings. It covers various virtual modalities for

children and adolescents, addressing assessment, diagnosis, and treatment for a range of mental health conditions. The review highlights telemental health as a viable and effective option, particularly for improving access to care, while also identifying challenges related to implementation, equity, and the need for standardized guidelines [9].

Optimizing pediatric mental health care delivery during and after COVID-19: A comprehensive review of telehealth innovations. This comprehensive review examines telehealth innovations aimed at optimizing pediatric mental health care delivery, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores diverse telehealth applications, including telepsychiatry, teletherapy, and virtual collaborative care models, for children and adolescents. The article emphasizes telehealth's role in expanding reach, maintaining continuity of care, and potentially improving outcomes by overcoming traditional access barriers, while also outlining future directions and challenges [10].

Description

Telehealth has significantly advanced the delivery of mental health services, particularly for survivors of trauma and abuse. Research consistently shows its potential to increase access and reduce barriers to care, which is especially critical for vulnerable populations, including adolescents. Virtual settings effectively facilitate diverse treatment modalities across various trauma types, emphasizing the necessity of adapted, trauma-informed approaches to ensure both safety and patient engagement [1]. This approach is not limited to specific demographics; broader systematic reviews confirm that virtual delivery of evidence-based trauma treatments, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), can be as effective as in-person therapy for a wide range of trauma populations, expanding access to specialized care where geographic, stigma, or scheduling barriers exist [6]. For children and adolescents, telehealth offers adaptable interventions for mental health conditions, including anxiety and trauma-related disorders. Systematic reviews exploring telehealth for delivering psychotherapy to children and adolescents identify various adaptable modalities, including CBT and family therapy, which demonstrate outcomes comparable to traditional in-person care for numerous conditions. Telehealth significantly improves accessibility for youth in remote areas or those facing mobility challenges, although implementation challenges and research gaps remain important considerations [2]. This adaptability highlights telemental health as a viable and effective option for assessment, diagnosis, and treatment for a broad spectrum of mental health conditions in pediatric settings [9]. Regarding child maltreatment, tele-

health offers critical avenues for both prevention and intervention. Rapid reviews illustrate how virtual platforms can facilitate remote assessments, therapy, and support services for children and families impacted by abuse. This highlights a need for careful attention to privacy, engagement, and bridging the digital divide to ensure equitable and effective care [3]. Furthermore, narrative reviews specifically focusing on telehealth-delivered Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) for child maltreatment suggest that it is an effective and accessible treatment, particularly when in-person therapy is challenging. Adaptations for virtual delivery have shown promising outcomes in reducing trauma symptoms in children and adolescents, consolidating evidence for its use in mental health services, parent training, and preventative education, thereby overcoming significant barriers to care for affected families [4, 8]. Beyond specific trauma-focused applications, telehealth approaches in pediatric mental health encompass a wide array of treatment modalities and their effectiveness, alongside crucial implementational factors. The growing evidence base supports telehealth interventions for various child and adolescent mental health conditions, including anxiety. Successful integration depends heavily on technological accessibility, robust training for providers, and proactive parental involvement. These innovations, including telepsychiatry and virtual collaborative care models, are vital for optimizing pediatric mental health care, especially as demonstrated during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring continuity of care and expanding reach by addressing traditional access barriers [7, 10]. While the benefits are clear, it is important to acknowledge areas requiring careful consideration. A mixed-methods study on remote forensic medical examinations for sexual violence victims during the COVID-19 pandemic showcases telehealth's potential for maintaining care continuity under challenging circumstances. However, it also points to significant limitations, particularly concerning evidence collection and the undeniable need for in-person components in forensic evaluations. This underscores that while telehealth is a powerful tool, its application must be thoughtfully adapted to the specific context and requirements of care, recognizing inherent limitations where physical interaction or sensitive data collection is paramount [5]. Addressing these nuances and continuing research on long-term efficacy and specific populations are essential for further development and ethical implementation of telehealth services [8, 9].

Conclusion

Telehealth represents a vital advancement in mental health care, substantially improving access and reducing barriers for vulner-

able populations, notably trauma and abuse survivors, and children and adolescents [1]. Reviews indicate that virtual delivery of psychotherapy and specialized trauma-focused treatments, such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT), is as effective as traditional in-person care across various trauma types and conditions [2, 4, 6]. This capability is particularly beneficial for individuals in remote areas or those with mobility constraints [2, 10]. Beyond general therapy, telehealth plays an instrumental role in addressing child maltreatment through both prevention and intervention strategies, enabling remote assessments, therapy, and crucial support services for affected families [3, 8]. The integration of these services for pediatric mental health requires critical attention to technological accessibility, comprehensive provider training, and active parental involvement for successful outcomes [7, 9]. While telehealth effectively maintains continuity of care, as observed in remote forensic medical examinations for sexual violence victims during the COVID-19 pandemic, it also presents limitations, particularly concerning evidence collection, underscoring the necessity for in-person components in certain evaluations [5]. Overall, telehealth optimizes pediatric mental health service delivery, expanding reach and overcoming traditional access barriers, although ongoing research is needed to address implementation challenges, privacy concerns, and to refine trauma-informed virtual approaches to ensure equitable and effective care for all populations [1, 8, 9, 10].

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