

Telephone therapy for depression? Study says yes

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Treating clinical depression on the telephone is nearly as effective as face-to-face consultations, a new Brigham Young University study finds.

The trial run included 30 people newly diagnosed with [major depression](#). Instead of eight scheduled visits to the clinic, the participants covered the same material during a series of phone calls with the therapist. Calls varied in length, ranging from 21 to 52 minutes. The patients did not receive antidepressant medication.

At a six month follow-up, 42 percent of participants had recovered from [depression](#). For comparison, similar therapy conducted in person has a 50 percent recovery rate.

"Offering a phone or webcam option for [psychotherapy](#) does appear warranted from an efficacy point of view," said Diane Spangler, a BYU psychology professor and a coauthor on the study. "It's more user-friendly - no commutes, more flexibility of place and time - and has no side effects."

Over-the-phone therapy may not be for everyone. One-third of eligible participants declined the option for telephone consultations, preferring the psychotherapist's couch to the one in their living room. But for those comfortable with phone calls, therapy could soon be cheaper, more convenient and minus awkward waiting rooms.

Though a sample of 30 people is not large, the BYU researchers cite a

previous antidepressant drug trial that happened to include a telephone counseling component. In that trial, the added benefit from phone counseling matched the results attained by the new BYU study.

More information: The study appears in the June issue of Behavior Therapy.

Provided by Brigham Young University

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