

Touching lives through video therapy

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An innovative therapy service is making a difference to the lives of those in Port Augusta who have been receiving Tele-web psychology counselling sessions from clinical psychology students in Adelaide.

UniSA's Psychology Clinic has been collaborating with Country Health SA over the past year, to provide weekly psychology counselling sessions to clients in Port Augusta and surrounding remote regions.

This week those students will be visiting Port Augusta to meet their clients face to face for the first time and to assess how the service has benefited the local community.

Psychology Clinic director, Dr Susan Simpson, said that for many clients

this type of service was the first type of therapy they had received in their lives.

"It has had a transformative effect and the use of this technology has assisted in providing a level of health care in rural and remote areas, which is in demand.

"There are also other advantages video therapy provides over the more traditional face to face sessions.

"Video link ups remove the need for clients to travel vast distances to receive therapy and clients usually feel this type of counselling is more anonymous. In areas where the population is small, they are assured that they won't be bumping into their therapist in the supermarket or down the same street.

"This can empower them to be more open in their sessions, leading to more [effective therapy](#). Video therapy also gives clients more control, they can zoom the camera in and out and even switch off the screen if they so wish.

Psychology student Sally Skewes, who has been counselling her client for the past year, said the therapy sessions she provided involved a range of psychotherapy approaches, including [cognitive behavioural therapy](#), mindfulness and schema therapy.

Skewes and the other Masters in Clinical Psychology students have developed a range of innovative ways of adapting therapeutic techniques so that they are compatible with tele-web psychology.

Skewes has been able to induce a deep state of relaxation in her clients, despite being in a separate room herself, 300km away.

"Video therapy does require clients to be motivated, but this service is a huge assistance to their recovery, " said Skewes.

Skewes said she was looking forward to meeting her clients for the first time in Port Augusta this week.

"We will continue our work together by helping our clients to find ways of remembering the techniques and strategies they have learned in therapy and to apply these to their day to day lives. This includes developing reminder cards that can be used to prompt them to use their new coping strategies."

Dr Simpson added that the success of the service in Port Augusta means that the clinic is now seeking to expand the service out to other areas including Roxby Downs and Coober Pedy.

Provided by University of South Australia

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