

Telemental Health: Definition, Effectiveness, and Applicability for the Rio Grande Valley

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Outline of Talk

- I. Mental Health Statistics & Need for Services
- II. Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy for Latino/a Individuals
- III. Definition of Telemental Health
- IV. Summary of Research on Effectiveness of Telemental Health
- V. Applicability of Telemental Health for the Rio Grande Valley

Need for Mental Health Services

- ❑ Research findings indicate that Latino/a individuals living in rural areas are at risk for depression and anxiety due to factors such as acculturative stress, discrimination, economic hardships, and low mental health literacy.
- ❑ In the RGV, 14.1% of individuals reported moderate depression (c.f. 8.1% in U.S.) and 10.6% of individuals reported moderate anxiety (c.f. 2.9% in U.S.) (Mykyta, Ghaddar, & Vela, 2018).
- ❑ However, access to mental health services is often very limited in rural areas, including the RGV, due to factors such as limited financial resources, mental health stigma, and a shortage of actual services.
- ❑ For example, there are *zero* licensed psychologists practicing in Starr and Willacy counties, 3.2 licensed psychologists per 100,000 residents in Cameron County, and 4.7 licensed psychologists per 100,000 residents in Hidalgo County (TX Department of State Health Services, 2016).

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy

- ❑ Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT): Changes problematic thinking patterns and behavioral patterns. Strategies include recognizing and altering negative thoughts, and facing one's fears rather than avoiding them.
- ❑ Several authors (e.g., Interian & Diaz-Martinez, 2007; Organista & Munoz, 1996) have advocated the use of culturally-responsive CBT for Latino/as experiencing depression and anxiety due to its directive, problem-solving approach that fits well with traditional expectations of immediate symptom relief and guidance; and its didactive style that helps to quickly orient clients to treatment and helps to demystify therapy, thus alleviating stigma.
- ❑ Indeed, culturally-responsive CBT has been found to be effective against depression and anxiety in Latino/a individuals (Benuto & O'Donohue, 2015; Collado et al., 2016; Hovey et al., 2014; Pineros-Leano et al., 2017).

Telemental Health

- ❑ Telemental Health: Deliverance of mental health services via digital means in a non in-person situation.
- ❑ Benefits: Improves access to services (e.g., reduces provider scarcity); reduces barriers such as transportation, scheduling, physical health, and child care difficulties; reduces stigma and privacy concerns (e.g., being seen in waiting room); clients may feel less inhibited.
- ❑ Research has found that telemental CBT is as effective as in-person CBT for depression (e.g., Ruskin et al., 2014), anxiety (e.g., Yuen et al., 2015), PTSD (e.g., Acierno et al., 2016), panic disorder (e.g., Bouchard et al., 2004), and OCD (e.g., Comer et al., 2017).
- ❑ No published research has evaluated effectiveness of telemental CBT for Latino/a individuals.

Telemental Health for RGV?

- ❑ According to recent data collected from Operation Lonestar (Ghaddar et al., 2018), only 9% of individuals had heard of telehealth.
- ❑ However, 79% of these individuals would consider using telehealth services if offered.
- ❑ The likelihood of using telehealth was significantly associated with fair or poor health.
- ❑ Questions to consider:
 - ❑ Current or proposed use of telemental health services in RGV?
 - ❑ Possible obstacles to implementing telemental health services in RGV?
 - ❑ Level of interest for developing telemental health curriculum for use in RGV?