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Conference Abstract

Video-based Rehabilitation of Citizens with Mental Illness

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of citizens with mental incapacities who used a video communication system with their social workers in order to avoid readmission and prevent worsening of symptoms.

Context: 57 adult citizens, female n=30, mean age=35,3 (22;67), male n=27, mean age = 39,7 (19;67) primary diagnoses with depression (n=2), schizophrenia (n=29), paranoia (n=3), manic-depression (n=2), mentally challenged (n=15) and brain damage (n=6) have had a video-based communication system installed in their homes in order to communicate more effectively with their social worker. Each citizen has used the system for a period of 6-18 months. The aims of the research project were twofold: first, to avoid readmission of the citizens to a psychiatric hospital, and second, to prevent worsening of symptoms by giving the citizens the possibility to communicate virtually with a team of social workers on a 24/7 basis. The project was conducted in Esbjerg Municipality in Denmark, beginning in 2013, and is ongoing.

Methods: Semi-structured interviews were been conducted with 15 of the 57 adult citizens with mental incapacities who received video-based communication equipment. The respondents represent the largest diagnosis group in the trial. They used the video equipment for an average of 7.3 months (6;8.5). The 15 citizens were diagnosed with schizophrenia (n=13) or paranoia (n=2). Interviews were carried out with 7 males , mean age = 33,0 (24;45) and 8 females, mean age = 37,8 (22;61).

The interviews lasted from 30-60 minutes each. The purpose of the interviews was to learn how citizens experienced the use of video communications as part of their rehabilitation from a mental illness. Participant-observation was also performed, focusing on how the citizens used the video-communication system in their everyday life. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using NVivo 10.

Theory: Recovery theory [1] has been applied.

Findings and discussion: The majority of the citizens stated that the video system had given them a feeling of safety and security, that it had helped them develop new individual coping strategies to avoid admission to hospital, and that it had increased their quality of life. Some citizens diagnosed with paranoia, however, found it difficult to stand directly in front of the web camera to communicate with the social worker and instead chose to stand next to the camera and to communicate using audio only. The preliminary findings from the project have shown positive results, and the next step will be to implement the system on a larger scale in Esbjerg Municipality.

Keywords

video communication; tele-mental health; recovery; mental illness

Reference

1. Anthony W A Recovery from mental illness: The Guiding Vision of the Mental Health Service System in the 1990s. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal* 1993;16(4); 11-23.