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## Psychological counseling of adolescents in rural areas with the help of telemedicine tools

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### Abstract

**Purpose.** The aim of the article is to summarize the international experience of psychological counseling with the help of telemedicine tools and to identify possibilities and limitations of their use in practice by summarizing international experience in this field. **Methodology.** The author uses methods of generalization of existing studies in the field of application of telemedicine tools in practice in order to find tools for increasing the availability of psychological support for young adolescents in rural areas. **Results.** As a result of generalization of international experience in providing counseling to adolescents in rural areas with the help of telemedicine tools, it has been shown that the rural environment has a greater negative impact on adolescents with psychological problems, and this type of assistance is less accessible to this social group. The author has revealed that limitation to the availability of psychological assistance are first of all the lack of anonymity, the developed culture of psychological self-help, the presence of the problem of strengthening the social stigma of mental illnesses in the rural community in comparison with urban areas. Also, the research has shown that the most acceptable institutional form of psychological counseling is access to such services through a specialized psychological counseling service organized within the educational space of a rural school. Moreover, according to generalization of experience, it was shown that the most effective means of telemedicine is to offer standardized programs of psychological assistance and to increase the protection of personal information by attracting specialists from regional centers. **Conclusion.** The use of telemedicine tools is a unique tool for

supporting adolescents with psychological problems and mental disorders in rural settings, while psychological counseling with the help of telemedicine tools at school is an effective means of accessing adolescents in rural areas to qualified care.

**For citation**

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**Keywords**

Rural youth, psychological counseling, telemedicine, rural school, stigma, rural areas.

## Introduction

According to the experience of the EU countries, the USA and Australia, modern literature has determined that there are significant difficulties in accessing psychological care for adolescents in rural areas in comparison with urban areas. To understand these barriers in providing assistance to adolescents is a significant scientific problem for Russia, even when its accessibility in urban areas is limited and in fact includes school psychologists and support phones. Support groups as an institutional form are not popular, and access to psychotherapeutic care is also very limited. At the same time, a significant number of studies shows that the availability of psychological care is the most significant for the development of the personality in adolescence. In addition, the lack of psychological help during this period can lead to more serious diseases in the future. Therefore, the formation of an effective institutional form of psychological counseling in the future should be one of the priorities for the development of education and health in rural areas.

Despite the fact that adolescents prefer to receive psychological support from informal sources, in particular from friends and relatives, studies show that the main characteristics of a teenager are an unbiased attitude to problems, understanding and acceptance of problems of the adolescent period, accessibility of assistance services. At the same time, essential limitations are the inaccessibility of psychological services or specialists who are always busy. Thus, the topic of development of new institutional forms of psychological counseling for adolescents in rural areas is a significant area of research.

## **Literature review**

Research in the field of psychological counseling for adolescents can be divided into:

- research in the field of effectiveness, opportunities and limitations in the provision of psychological counseling services through telemedicine;
- research in the field of generalization of the practice of psychological counseling for adolescents [Boyd, Aisbett, Francis, Kelly, Newnham, Newnham, 2006; Coyne, 2016];
- work in the field of institutional forms of psychological counseling of adolescents in rural areas [Gulliver, Griffiths, Christensen, 2012; Hickie, Groom, 2002];
- formation of telemedicine services within the framework of school psychological counseling [Lindsey, Kalafat, 1998].

## **Materials and methods**

The article uses methods of generalizing the results of previous studies: the use of telemedicine tools for psychological counseling of various groups: veterans in the United States, rural schoolchildren in Australia, data on the use of counseling tools in EU clinics for depression, post-traumatic syndrome and panic attacks. Also, the work summarizes the theoretical provisions of the telemedicine implementation.

### **Use of telemedicine in psychological counseling**

Telemedicine tools for psychological counseling are considered to be all technologies implemented by means of Internet technologies and allowing to conduct a feedback between the patient and the psychologist in real time. In particular, counseling can be carried out through both direct communication via webcams, and through online chat rooms, e-mail, various messengers.

The introduction of telemedicine technologies for psychological counseling, especially those based on Internet technologies using web cameras, is the most controversial area of the past 10 years. The difference in the position regarding the application of such an institutional form is the effectiveness of its application. Despite some disagreements, the problem of telemedicine in psychological counseling is widely covered in modern studies, and in a number of works its effectiveness has already been proved on the basis of analysis of such forms of feedback as structured interviews and completed online questionnaires [Bear6, Amir, 2008; Tate, Zabinski, 2004; White, Jones, McGarry, 2000)].

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The part of the research is devoted to comparing telemedicine instruments in comparison with the effectiveness of full-time psychological counseling. At the same time, despite the fact that telemedicine is a scientifically significant area of research, development of accessibility of psychological counseling and training. A number of studies have empirical evidence that there is a significant number of telemedicine benefits in psychological counseling. First, many researchers point out that such a way of help significantly reduces the problem of stigma visiting relevant clinics, providing services in dangerous or uncomfortable conditions, reduces the time spent visiting a psychotherapist or psychologist, which has a positive effect on people who are depressed [Gould, Munfakh, Lubell, Kleinman, Parker, 2002].

However, despite these advantages, there were also revealed disadvantages of this method of organizing psychological counseling. First of all, the problem area is to ensure the patient's safety in the presence of his suicidal tendencies, to administer the process of providing services, to license activities [Hickie, Groom, 2002]. Also, a number of studies has been shown that psychologists are often unprepared for effective work in telemedicine, which raises the question of the need for professional retraining or even a separate licensing of this activity. However, in general, despite these limitations, studies based on the behavior of veterinarians counseled from the post-traumatic syndrome have shown their effectiveness and safety [Gros, Veronee, Strachan, Ruggiero, Acierno, 2011].

Taking into account these factors, many clinics in international practice refuse to provide psychological counseling services through telemedicine tools. However, when they are used, clients indicate satisfaction with the help received, the level of which varies depending on psychological problems. So, in the case of panic attacks, this method is more effective than in the treatment of depression and post-traumatic syndrome. However, the results obtained are more relevant to adult patients, but some studies on counseling children and adolescents also point the effectiveness of these methods [Pesamaa, Ebeling, Kuusimaki, Winblad, Isohanni, Moilanen, 2004].

### **Summarizing the results of the practice of implementing psychological counseling with the help of telemedicine**

A hypothesis of international practice, that the rural social environment is more aggressive than the urban one for a teenager with psychological problems, is considered to be proven. The social structure of the rural society is intolerant to psychological problems, including ones among adolescents. Any manifestations of emotional problems are defined by society as a manifestation of weakness, they are the cause of the persecution by adults and are met with mistrust and condemnation. At the same time,

the severity of psychological problems is often exaggerated by others and can lead to the emergence of social stigma, as well as lead to the formation of a stable pattern of delinquent behavior of adolescents [Boyd, Aisbett, Francis, Kelly, Newnham, Newnham, 2006].

Moreover, almost all studies indicate that the use of services for psychological care for adolescents living in rural areas is limited by the absence of anonymity of its provision. In a small social group of a separate settlement, the possibility of maintaining anonymity when receiving psychological assistance is significantly reduced, so the use of telemedicine tools can solve this problem. Also, a significant limitation in obtaining psychological help is the lack of awareness of the possibility of receiving such help.

Thus, adolescents living in rural areas need more psychological help, but it is less accessible to them in the form of face-to-face consultations. Therefore, with the help of telemedicine services, the provision of psychological assistance is the only way to obtain it, despite all possible limitations. In addition, often teenagers in rural areas do not have access to modern means of communication, so the most acceptable form is the provision of psychological support in rural schools, especially in case, when the problems experienced by the teenager can not be resolved in the supportive therapy by the school psychologist.

It should be noted that this approach is effective because often teenagers turn to help in case it is offered. Thus, in international practice, practice is developed when teenagers in rural areas are recommended by school psychologists to seek help from a specialized service provided by psychological help through telemedicine services after prior counseling by a school psychologist. In addition, based on the generalization of experience, it has been shown that the most effective means of telemedicine is to offer standardized programs of psychological assistance [Arthur, 2005] and to increase the protection of personal information by attracting specialists from regional centers.

## **Conclusion**

The use of telemedicine tools is a unique tool for supporting adolescents with psychological problems and mental disorders in rural area. At the same time, psychological counseling with the help of telemedicine tools in the school is an effective means of access of the adolescents in rural areas to qualified care. The model of providing psychological assistance to adolescents through telemedicine, which is approved in the international practice as part of the process of education and socialization implemented by rural schools, can be used in Russia in the formation of the institutional form of psychological support for schoolchildren in rural Russia.

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## **Психологическое консультирование подростков сельской местности с помощью инструментов телемедицины**

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### **Аннотация**

**Цель.** Целью работы является обобщение международного опыта психологического консультирования с помощью инструментов телемедицины, а также выявление возможностей и ограничений использований инструментов в практике с помощью обобщения международного опыта в этой области. **Методология.** В работе применяются методы обобщения существующих исследований в области применения инструментов телемедицины с целью поиска инструментов увеличения доступности психологической помощи подростов сельской местности. **Результаты.** В результате обобщения международного опыта осуществления консультирования подростков сельской местности с помощью инструментов телемедицины показано, что сельская среда в большей степени негативно влияет на подростков, имеющих психологические проблемы, при этом именно для данной социальной группы в меньшей степени доступна такая помощь. Было выявлено, что к ограничению доступности психологической помощи в первую очередь относится отсутствие анонимности, развитой культуры психологической самопомощи, наличия

проблемы усиления социальной стигмы психических заболеваний в сельском социуме по сравнению с городскими территориями. Также в результате исследования показано, что наиболее приемлемой институциональной формой психологического консультирования является доступ к таким услугам посредством специализированной службы психологического консультирования, организованной в рамках воспитательного и образовательного пространства сельской школы. Кроме того, на основе обобщения опыта было показано, что наиболее эффективными средствами телемедицины является предложения стандартизированных программ психологической помощи, а также повышение защищенности личной информации за счет привлечения специалистов областных центров.

**Заключение.** Применение инструментов телемедицины является уникальным инструментом поддержки подростков с психологическими проблемами и психическими расстройствами в условиях сельской местности, при этом психологическое консультирование с помощью инструментов телемедицины в школе является эффективным средством доступности подростков в сельской местности к квалифицированной помощи.

#### Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

Смирнова О.О. Психологическое консультирование подростков сельской местности с помощью инструментов телемедицины // Психология. Историко-критические обзоры и современные исследования. 2017. Т. 6. № 4В. С. 266-274.

#### Ключевые слова

Сельская молодежь, психологическое консультирование, телемедицина, сельская школа, стигма, сельская местность

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