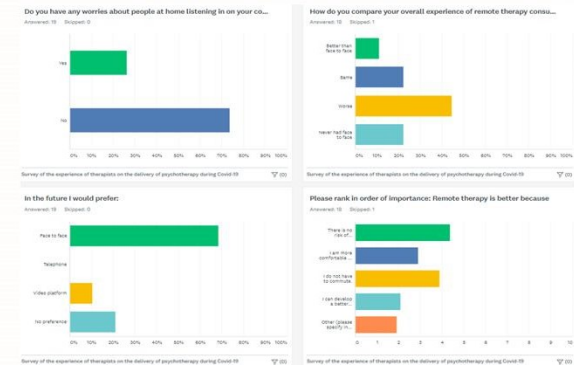


# Patient and Therapist satisfaction with remote working compared to face to face consultations in Psychotherapy

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## Introduction and Aim

- There has been a recent expansion in remote consultations in the context of psychotherapy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to its novelty there is not a lot of data in this area.
- The Aim of this QI Project was to evaluate patient and therapist satisfaction with remote consultation compared to face to face consultations in Psychotherapy.

## Method

- Patients and therapists were asked to fill in two anonymised surveys via the online platform SurveyMonkey.
- The first survey focussed on the perception of the pros and cons of remote consultation (telephone/video link) versus face to face consulting, as well as patient and therapist expressed preferences for future consultations once the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic have been lifted. Respondents were also able to give free text commentary. The second survey asked how their experience of remote consultations could be improved.
- The data gathered was processed into graphs by the SurveyMonkey platform.

## Results

- 16 out of 48 patients and 19 out of 34 therapists replied to the first survey.
- Most patients are participating in therapy via video link. The majority of the therapists are currently consulting remotely, either by telephone or video link. All respondents felt confident using these methods and concerns regarding these were low.
- 63% of patients found virtual therapy consultation was worse. 31% felt that their experience was the same and 6% had never had face to face consultations.
- 45% of therapists felt that the overall experience of psychotherapy consultations remotely was worse, 35% felt it was an equal or better experience and 20% had not previously done face to face consultations.
- For therapists, the two most highly ranked advantages of remote consultations were no risk of contracting covid 19 and no commute, and for face to face consultations it was the ability to develop a better emotional relationship with the patient and being in a room with another person. Regarding what made patients preference for face to face consultation: 80% rated a better emotional relationship, 73% rated privacy, 60% said they like to be in a room with someone and 47% said there is no technology.
- The majority of patients and therapists would prefer face to face consultations in future.

## Conclusions

- Remote consultations are necessary in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to protect patients and therapists from contracting the disease, but returning to face to face consultations would be preferred in the long term as there is the perception that it provides a better therapeutic experience. The majority of patients and therapists would prefer face to face consultations according to this survey and a patient survey.
- It is also noted that a third of the therapists indicated that remote consultations compared with face to face were equal or a better experience.
- Suggestions for improvement from a follow up survey included better equipment and strength of internet connection used for remote consultations. Recommendations include the use of a protocol for remote consultations which has been developed. The protocol will include verbal reassurance at first meeting that it is not only a confidential space but that there is no one else in the room/the room is not overheard (on the therapist end.) There can be another QI project to evaluate if there has been an improvement.

