



Using Avatars to Support Therapeutic Practice

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Meaningful Online Psychiatric Care in an Era of COVID-19
RCPsych
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Background



NHS
Birmingham and Solihull
Mental Health
NHS Foundation Trust



Implementation



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- Pilot use of the software on medium secure unit, across three areas
 - Clinical Interventions (both group and 1 to 1)
 - Education/Training Sessions
 - Reflective practice for staff
- 8 staff were trained in using the software, then used it in up to 50% of activities
- Evaluation of use -
 - **Aims** - Assess the **feasibility, acceptability** and **perceptions** of using the ART tool in a medium secure setting across the domains of education, reflective practice and clinical interventions.
 - Recorded details of each session inc any adverse/risk events
 - Semi structured interviews

Outcomes



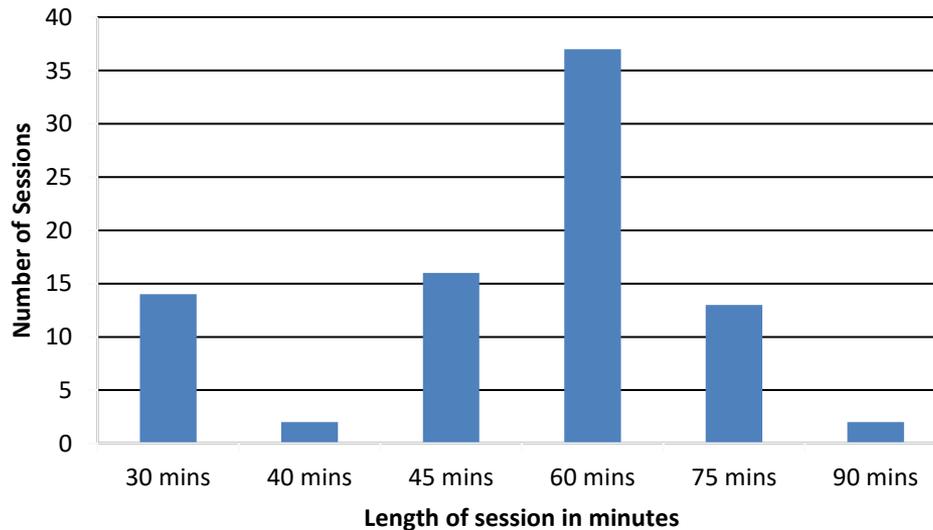
84 sessions completed in total

Clinical Intervention – 32
MBT group, MBT 1:1 and individual nursing sessions

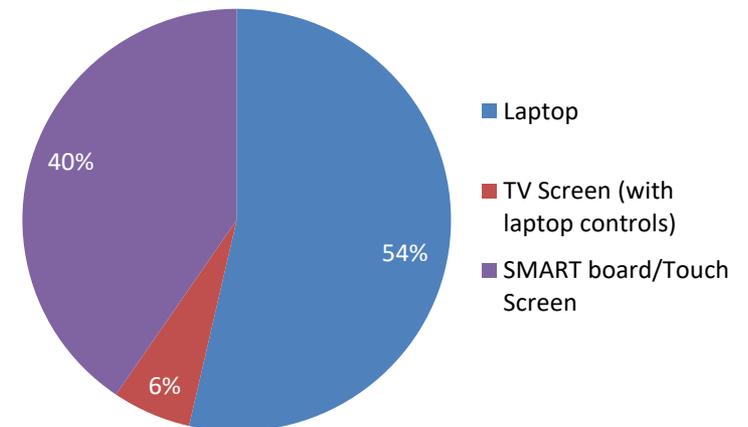
Education – 22
Responsibility without blame, high fidelity simulation

Reflective Practice – 30
Incident debrief, extended handover, supervision

Length of Session



Device Used



Interviews



General Factors

How they heard/became involved
Previous similar experience
Deciding when to use the tool

Strengths

Tool elements
Improvement of session

Session Factors

Impact on the relationship
Difference in session/outcome

Weaknesses

Tool elements
Feeling unprepared for anything
Barrier to use

Future Use

Any suggested changes
Choosing to continue using avatars
Anyone/any time not to use

Completed Interviews

Service Users: 5
Staff Facilitators: 5
Staff Participants: 5

Themes 1-4



Theme title	Description of theme
1. Concrete visual presence and imagery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Avatars allow people to see things tangibly without needing to retain or create an internal image- Can see things the whole situation rather than just an individual part- Seeing something visually makes it more real
2. Mentalisation processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Visual elements of the avatar software aid expression of emotion- Avatars aid understanding of own perspectives, and the perspectives of other people- Externalises and creates distance from emotions, making it easier to share and talk about them,- There are limitations regarding the complexity of the emotions and thoughts that can be communicated
3. Enhanced focus and depth and problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Software aids in problem solving processes - it is simple and can help to break down complex things, and help find solutions.- Systematic way of exploring issues which can add focus and depth to conversations
4. Power and vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Impact of software on expressions of vulnerability- Expression of power through the software

Themes 5-8



Theme title	Description of theme
5. Choice and different ways of using	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Practical differences to how software is used, it is not a homogenised tool.- Decisions about who to use it with, and whether they have a choice.- Different communication styles and how these impact on preferences in how the software is used.- Initial impressions and feeling open to using new treatment tool or being put off and how this impacted choice. Prejudice vs Pioneers- When using avatars might be beneficial when it might not
6. Adding value	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Adds value to professional working life and role, by adding pleasure, purpose, and variety- Adds value to patient and staff day to day life as they can find it fun and enjoyable
7. Practical and logistical processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Collaborative considerations of using the tool, including it's set up and management- Being aware of managing risk and confidentiality concerns whilst using the software- Software is not a substitute for good therapeutic skills, and still requires strong facilitation to ensure safety, and maintain therapeutic rapport.- Planning, pace of sessions and structure, managing time pressures
8. Barriers and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Using technology in this way comes with access issues and barriers to implementation- IT and equipment issues- The impact of literacy and computer skills

Conclusions



- Avatar software is feasible to implement, acceptable to patients and staff, and may offer an opportunity to aid mentalisation and reflection.
- There are a number of barriers that need to be overcome for successful adoption into secure care settings, and wider use.
- Despite the obstacles, this software offers a novel way of connecting with a hard to reach patient groups- such as those within our personality focussed recovery service.
- It also offers new ways of developing long term therapeutic relationships and emotional connections which are often challenging for both staff and patients.

Moving Forward



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- Remote and online care – 4 NHS trusts
- Business case for wider use within BSMHFT
 - Train the trainer
 - Remote and online use
 - Learning and development
 - Staff clinical supervision
 - Staff coaching
- Research collaborations across trusts



Questions



Thank You