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TRANSCULTURAL TELEPSYCHIATRY AND ITS IMPACT ON PATIENT SATISFACTION

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Introduction: National and International telepsychiatry service was established between Denmark and Sweden in order to increase access to cross-cultural expertise. Patient acceptability study was conducted to assess the patients' attitudes toward the quality, advantages and disadvantages of telepsychiatry service.

Methods: Over a period January 2005-December 2007, 61 patients were treated via telepsychiatry by clinicians that speak patients' respective mother tongues. Video-conferencing equipment connected the Little Prince Psychiatric Centre in Copenhagen with two hospitals, one asylum seekers' centre and one social institution in Denmark. These stations were also connected to the Swedish department of the Centre. Number of languages spoken was 9 while the number of nationalities treated was 11. No interpreter assistance has been used.

After the end of the telepsychiatry contact all patients were asked to complete a satisfaction questionnaire.

Results: Patients reported a high level of acceptance and satisfaction with telepsychiatry. They expressed a wish to use telepsychiatry via their mother tongue, rather than interpreter-assisted mental health care in the future.

Discussion: The restricted physical contact and non-verbal communication of telepsychiatry was compensated by the fact that the doctor and patient spoke the same language and had similar cultural and/or national references. The results of the survey may contribute to further development of, primarily, European Telepsychiatry Network. However, this model may be used for conducting of larger international telepsychiatry service capable to provide mental health care toward diversity of patient populations underserved on their mother tongue worldwide.