

Psychotherapy in the age of technology: The ethical challenges of online treatments for South African clinicians

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Abstract

As technology is constantly advancing, new developments have filtered into the therapeutic enterprise, affecting the way that many clinicians conduct treatment. New modes of communication introduce a host of clinical concerns, which need careful consideration. To this end, South African psychologists are guided by the HPCSA ethics guidelines on 'telemedicine', and additionally, psychoanalytically informed clinicians consult current psychoanalytic recommendations on this topic. This paper deliberates the ethical implications of online treatments, informed by both of these professional sources. It addresses dilemmas pertaining to: contractual issues, the question of the best interests of the patient, confidentiality, impact on the frame, transference-countertransference dilemmas, and some of the practical problems that may arise. Vignettes are used to illustrate these dilemmas.