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Knowledge About Telepsychiatry Among Patients in Poland

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Objective: Telepsychiatry is a new method of providing medical care with the use of modern communication technologies. The objective of this study was to examine patient's knowledge about the term 'telepsychiatry' and to check their opinion about this way of contacting with a doctor.

Methods: To achieve this, the anonymous survey has been carried out on a group of 64 patients aged 24-77. 40 women and 24 men participated in the study, all of them were treated in different clinical settings of the Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy in Katowice, Poland.

Results: Preliminary results show, that the majority of respondents have never heard of that term and do not know what it means. However, to every question concerning the utility of telepsychiatry (e.g. 'Can doctor's contact with patient via video connections be helpful in actual well-being assessment?') more than half of the participants gave a positive answer. 58 % of patients acknowledged, that doctor's contact with the patient via video connection could be complementary to the eye-to-eye conversation, but it could not replace it. What is interesting, people aged 25-49 as well as women are more prone to reply 'I don't know'. Additionally, outpatient and day psychotherapy ward participants seem to be less willing to attribute positive characteristics to telepsychiatry.

Conclusions: Respondents, regardless of their education, age, gender or diagnose, perceive telepsychiatry advantages. In connection with that, implementing this method into Polish medical service seems to be useful and is in accordance with patients opinion.