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Telepsychiatry in nursing

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There is a number of research describing difficulties in dealing with cross-cultural patients. Access to relevant care as well as its availability are often limited due to: a) lack of respective qualified resources b) linguistically, cultural and even racial barriers in addressing of mental health care needs of cross-cultural patient population. e-Mental Health (eMH) is the term that covers the use of telecommunication technologies in provision of mental health services to individuals in communities that are underserved due to geographic, linguistically or cultural isolation. By use of various eMH applications, primarily videoconference i.e. "telepsychiatry", we may improve assessment and/or treatment of refugees and asylum seekers on distance e.g. Arabic speaking psychiatrist located in Sweden would be able to assess and/or treat refugees from Syria located in Germany. The nurse's focus on the challenge of meeting immigrants in the health care system has shown that there are special problems associated with this side of nursing.

The staff is required in order to overcome the barriers that can complicate the contact. The barriers are of religious, cultural and linguistic nature. Therefore the nurse need to be creative and use various approaches in order to reduce these barriers. The nurse's task related to telepsychiatry session is to create a safe atmosphere in the remote videoconference call situation. Tasks for arranging the sessions and follow-up on treatment are challenging and require compassionate and professional qualities of the staff dealing with resource-poor and traumatized patients. Understanding the conceptual world of traumatized psychiatric patients i.e. refugees and migrants, can be difficult. Another ethnic background of the patients makes it even harder. Therefore telepsychiatry is a valuable tool, but does not replace the psychiatric nurses' understanding of transcultural issues.

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