

Media Release

Will the mouse replace the couch as the psychologist's tool of choice?

New research reveals Australians are taking to e-therapy in their droves

Research launched today reveals Australians are increasingly turning to the Internet to seek advice on relationships, stress, depression and personal growth.

Commenting on the research, Eleni Langas said, "One of the biggest growth areas for the psychotherapy profession is the provision of therapy services online. We are seeing huge demand for Internet and telephone counseling coming from people who would not otherwise seek help from a therapist in person for a variety of reasons."

"The Internet offers clients anonymity, convenience and direct access to a wide range of specialised services which might not otherwise be within a reasonable distance to their home."

"This is particularly good news for people in rural Australia – many of whom are experiencing enormous pressure as a result of years of drought. Now people in the bush can get advice and strategies for coping from the comfort of their living room; with e-therapy, they need never feel alone or desperate."

The research also warns that therapists who do not have an online presence may be disadvantaged in the future.

Ms Langas said, "Since psychotherapy became popularised, people have associated the image of a reclining couch with therapy. Our research challenges this stereotype and suggests that the Sigmund Freuds of the future are more likely to be Internet savvy with a high degree of computer literacy, preferring the mouse as their therapeutic tool of choice over the couch."

"E-therapy does have its limits and it is unlikely to replace the relationship and rapport that two humans develop with face-to-face contact. Nonetheless, e-therapists need to think about modifying their communication skills and adapting to text-based communication in order to foster good clinical relationships.

"The principles of professional ethics that apply to face-to-face relationships also extend to online relationships and clients should insist that their therapist adheres to these principles."

Eleni Langas is available for interview on her research, which will be presented on the 1 October 2005 during the 40th Annual Conference of the Australian Psychological Society (Melbourne: 28 Sept – 2 Oct).

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Conference**
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