

## **Locum Psychiatrist Remote Consultation Guidesheet**

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### **Introduction**

First released in 2003, Skype offers free, worldwide video access to any patient with an Internet connection, either by mobile device or desktop computer.

Since its introduction, practitioners have identified a number of functional areas where Skype can help improve the quality of care by raising the level of accessibility, reach and convenience for both patients and doctors.

When Skype calls and videoconferencing may not serve to replace personal visits and interactions, many physicians are turning to it for pre-appointment screening, assessments and post-appointment follow-ups and monitoring.

In remote areas with inadequate medical care facilities, Skype video calling allows patients to connect with their doctors and other medical providers for virtual consultations and evaluations, saving on a good amount of travel and other medical expenses.

Despite these developments it is important to realize that video-chat platforms such as Skype were developed for marketing to the general consumer and not for health care. This means that there are some issues to consider when using Skype.

### **Possible Problems**

1. **Security:** The main concern with using a web cam program such as Skype is around security. Unlike some programs, absolute security cannot be guaranteed. Unless there is investment in dedicated Internet connections, dedicated soundproofed rooms and specific tele-healthcare software, then it may be possible for others to listen in.
2. **Bandwidth:** Videoconference can consume a lot of Internet bandwidth and monthly allowance of data limits.
3. **Equipment:** In order to function effectively for tele-healthcare both parties need a computer with a video camera, a good internet connection and a quiet area. It is important to realize that without adequate steps being taken, conversations may be overheard at both ends of the video Consultation.

**In order to minimize these risks, Simon Bainbridge and the Locum Psychiatrist:**

1. Simon Bainbridge and the Locum Psychiatrist will treat information collect via Skype with the same confidentiality as any clinical information with the same expectations around consent. This means that no one apart from your General Practitioner will be informed of our conversation and there will be no recording of our interview without your express consent. In New Zealand there is the implicit expectation that conversations via telephone, webcam and email are private and not record by third parties but government policy is out of my control.
2. Simon Bainbridge and the Locum Psychiatrist use a dedicated Internet telephone line and have a monthly plan with Vodafone that ensures plenty of data allowance and bandwidth availability.
3. Simon Bainbridge and the Locum Psychiatrist use an Apple iMac with video camera built in. The computer is in a quiet office and Skype consultations will be timed so that no one else is around.

Using Skype for our work together implies consent and acceptance to the issues described above.

Yours truly,

Simon Bainbridge

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