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TELEPSYCHIATRY - WHEN RESOURCES ARE SHORT

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"Telepsychiatry" refers to video conferencing (interactive audio-video link in real-time where patient and doctor can both see and hear each other at the same time). Limited access to clinicians that have similar cultural and ethnic background decrease speed and accuracy of diagnosis and treatment (especially psychotherapeutic intervention). One solution to this problem is to give refugees, migrants and asylum seekers access to ethnic specialists by using Telepsychiatry.

4 stations have been established in Denmark during pilot project in periode 2005-2007. The equipment has been installed in two hospitals, one asylum seekers centre and one social rehabilitation institution.

Participants were mentally ill refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. 61 participants were involved in the assessment and/or treatment through 318 telepsychiatry provided remote consultations. They received mental health care by video-conferencing from providers who spoke participants' own language, i.e. without the assistance of interpreters.

All participants were asked to fulfil 10-items satisfaction questionnaire after the end of Telepsychiatry contact. The most of participants would prefer treatment via Telepsychiatry than via interpreter.

Aside from cross cultural patient population, Telepsychiatry can be used in order to provide mental health care towards domestic population in rural and remote areas with resource shortage.