

43rd APS Annual Conference



Media Release

23 – 27 September 2008: Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart Tasmania

Online therapy beneficial in treating mental health problems

Online therapy can be just as effective as face-to-face treatment for treating mental health problems such as social phobia, panic disorder and depression, and takes a third of the therapist's time, a new clinical trial has found.

Dr Nickolai Titov, clinical psychologist and University of New South Wales senior lecturer, said online therapy is effective for treating some mental health conditions, because of its convenience, anonymity and flexibility.

"Results from recent trials indicate that Internet programs, supplemented with three hours or less of email or telephone contact with a psychologist, can result in clinically significant improvements in patients with depression, social phobia and panic disorder," Dr Titov said.

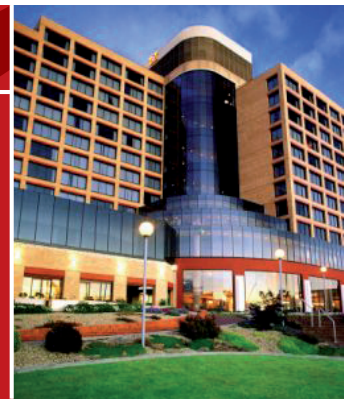
"Online therapy is also viewed as less stressful than seeking face-to-face treatment, particularly for patients with common anxiety disorders."

According to the trial, 93 per cent of participants reported high levels of satisfaction with the online treatment program.

"The results can be just as good as completing treatment face-to-face with a therapist. It's simple, straightforward and easy to access, as well as relatively comforting for patients," Dr Titov said.

"The Internet program we have developed for treating social phobia involves logging in for lessons, practising exercises and completing homework. Patients can also access discussion forums to share their experiences and learnings. They have regular email contact with the psychologist."

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According to Dr Titov, online therapy could support and help to strengthen the existing mental health system.

“If the 250,000 Australian’s suffering from social phobia sought face-to-face treatment, the mental health system would be overwhelmed.”

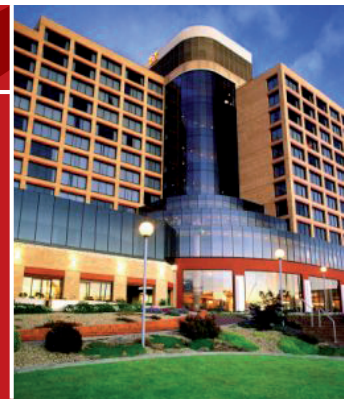
“Online therapy also allows us to reach more Australians living with mental illness, particularly those who are living in remote and regional areas, who may have limited access to psychologists,” Dr Titov said.

Dr Titov will present the research findings this week at the Australian Psychological Society’s 43rd annual conference, ‘*Psychology Leading Change*,’ at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart from 23 to 27 September.

To download the full research report visit: www.apsconference.com.au

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To coordinate an interview with Dr Nickolai Titov, please contact Elaine Grant on 0412 683 068



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