The online therapy is a new development in mental health, which implies that certain therapist offers some psychological advices and support with the help of Internet. Online therapy, which is widely spread through various services on the Internet, tends to be very close to mental health. Dealing directly with psychology and e-counseling, it cannot exist without therapist, a person who is aimed to provide the psychological support and advice through the Internet. Due to the fact that online therapy is relatively new method of psychological help, it is now extremely popular as many individuals have mental disorders and life problems. The therapist does his best to aid the individual to overcome the hardships and mishaps. The e-counseling can be conducted with the help of different means online: through messaging and e-mails, video conferences, Internet phones, online chats and so on. Online therapy differs greatly from psychotherapy as therapist cannot diagnose or treat the person online. Online therapists usually are seen to offer guidance or advice about the problems, concerning peoples' lives, relationships and work. Enjoying wide popularity worldwide, online counseling has become more than simple help. Nowadays, it offers the traditional and original psychological approaches and has a huge number of customers in every country. Provided that the number of clients was and is constantly growing, the instant need for mental health foundation was noticed. As the result, International Society for Mental Health Online was created. This foundation reports that the incredibly positive impact of online therapy can be seen today. They say that patients tend to get much satisfaction taking online treatment as well as feel more comfortable, being alone with the therapist, rather than attending the face-to-face group meeting.

It is common knowledge that such services can be varied on different web-sites. That is why; let us investigate how online therapy services are presented on three different websites. First of all, let us pay attention to *Find-a-Therapist.com*. It is a private clinic, offering online therapy. The clinic is targeted to connect certain client with the most suitable online therapist to provide better communication and help. The online therapy was launched only in 2000. All the therapists have at least ten years of post graduate clinical experience. The Find-a-Therapist.com is observed to offer the cost effective solutions for the clients (Find-a-Therapist.com, 2011). The web site is seen

to deal with both matching the clients with certain therapist and just offering the professional online therapist. The communication is presented in all possible virtual ways. In other case, we browsed *FixingU.com*, which is a company of online counseling therapists and psychotherapists. Unlike Find-a-Therapist.com, this website offers the choice of psychotherapists who tend to cope with peoples' problems more deeply. The professionals here are highly trained, experienced and properly educated and they offer behavioral therapy, counseling and cognitive therapy. They are trained to treat mood swings, shyness and social anxiety, insomnia, eating disorders, panic attacks, phobias as so on (FixingU.com, 2011). The team consists of psychologists, therapists and career consultants. The communication with clients is provided in any virtual form. Finally, we visited *Online Therapy Institute*, which puts the privacy policy to the forefront. Here, any user or patient may leave comments and questions on forum. Moreover, the patients can write e-mails with their problems and psychologists and therapists of the Online Therapy Institute will try to help everyone. What is more important, this Institute complies with all applicable laws and regulations. Here, the patient may get the key information about the concept of online therapy as well as order the professional face-to-face online workshops (Online Therapy Institute, 2011).

Some state regulatory boards are observed to deal with online therapy. The abovementioned foundation of International Society for Mental Health Online is relevant in our case. They are in charge of exploring and promoting mental health in digital age. The implementation of online therapy projects and the discussion of current issues are regularly done to make certain breakthroughs in this field. What is more, this foundation is represented by many professionals in online therapy. The foundation consists of online practitioners, researchers, teachers, students and all of them are aimed to sustain positive mental health (International Society for Mental Health Online, 2011).

Online therapy can be a subject of concern in some cases. The ethical and legal issues in online psychology should be taken into account. Due to the fact that online therapy does not deal with real-world interaction, some patients may become upset about it. All the online therapists should obtain informed consent, which is the legal procedure oriented to make sure that the patient

knows and realizes all the points, risks and costs of online therapy treatment (Kanani, 2003). This way, the therapist is obliged to inform the client about the nature of treatment, suggest some alternative methods of treatment and predict some potential benefits and risks of such treatment. That is why, it is extremely important for patient to consider all points carefully beforehand. He should be aware of fees, he should know if the insurance covers any of the costs. In addition, the patient has to clearly define his goals and expectations and consider the potential health hazards to be ready to cope with. Apart from all this, the therapists have a legal duty to warn, informing some authorities or third parties if the client tends to pose threat towards himself or towards other individuals. All in all, it is clear that online therapists should take into consideration the ethical guidelines and laws in accordance with regulations of their location and certain state, where they are licensed to practice online therapy.

In some cases online therapy patients may be concerned about the confidentiality of their information. Regarding that conversations are exercised online, there exists a danger if the necessary measures are not taken to provide the adequate personal information protection. There were certain occasions when such data was revealed. For example, in Michigan one of the healthcare companies made nonsense, posting the medical records of thousands of patients on the Internet. As the result, the information was accessed be everyone and the patients were disappointed and discontented. I would recommend every patient before taking the online treatment to make sure that the privacy of information is guaranteed. If the services are listed and offered within the website, ensure yourself that they utilize a secure site in order to protect your personal information. The final step is to discuss precaution with your current online therapies and talk about the efforts spent to provide the privacy of personal data (Luepker, 2003). In some cases, the confidentiality of information can be neglected due to your own fault. I would not recommend you accessing your personal data through e-mails and chats at work. Some unexpected information loss as well as sharing to undesirable users may happen. I would advise you to close your web browsers as well as mailboxes to feel safe. It is not sensible to share your passwords. On the other hand, the patient has to check whether his personal information is accurate. That is why, it would be great to provide

more contacts, indicate name and phone number to be sure that therapist addresses you the correct storage of your personal data.

Let us also pay our attention to advantages and disadvantages of online therapy. Online therapy is considered to be beneficial, because it offers mental health information to patients who are located in remote or rural areas. Moreover, it provides the accessibility to disabled people who would prefer to have the face-to-face conversation with online therapist. What is more, online therapy is reported to be convenient for many people. The dire need in psychological support can be received online and exactly at the moment when the mental disorders happen, not spending some time to get to the nearest clinic. Being online, the patient may feel free when talking to friends and relatives about his personal issues. Apart from taking e-counseling, the patient can know more about the healthy psychological state and the ways of its maintenance (Zelvin, 2004). However, some disadvantages can be noticed as well. Most insurance policies do not tend to cover online therapy as it is relatively new development in mental health and is not greatly investigated. Furthermore, some patients argue about the lack of their personal information confidentiality. If the right measures are taken, the confidentiality can be guaranteed and the protection for every individual can be provided. Next disadvantage is that therapists cannot properly respond to the crisis situations. If the person gets nervous and loses control over his emotions, therapist is unable to set his mind at rest as conversation is done in a virtual world. People who suffer from serious psychiatric illnesses are not recommended to take online therapy, because their mental state can be deteriorated. The scope of therapist's aid is limited and people who have complicated or specific problems cannot be properly treated online. When choosing the necessary treatment, online therapists can be sometimes wrong as they cannot notice all signs of body language and some facial expressions.

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