



## **TELENEUROPSYCHOLOGY AND STUDENT TRAINING**

*Official Statement of the New York Neuropsychology Group (NYNG)*

*Approved by the Board of Directors June 2020*

Neuropsychological assessment is a gold standard for diagnosis and clinical decision-making in individuals with neurocognitive disorders, and research supports its feasibility, validity, and reliability. Assessments have traditionally been conducted in-person, but social distancing recommendations to address the COVID-19 pandemic have required neuropsychologists to reconsider in-person practice. Neuropsychologists are now considering or have adapted to remote assessments via video conferencing and telephone delivered telehealth, specifically for inpatient and outpatient clinical services. Teleneuropsychology provides a critical means to connect providers and patients, not only during the current pandemic, but also when access to physical office space is not advisable or possible. Teleneuropsychology assessments have been developed and used in research for several years, and remote services are now being covered by most major insurers to address clinical needs while maintaining social distancing. Perhaps more importantly, a growing body of literature suggests that teleneuropsychology is a valid and reliable alternative to traditional in-person assessments, and is supported by anecdotal evidence from neuropsychologists who have elected to provide remote services.

Similarly, teleneuropsychology provides a reliable and feasible mode for training in clinical neuropsychology. Guidelines for specialized education and training in neuropsychology established by the Houston Conference are recognized by the American Academy of Clinical Neuropsychology (AACN) as core requirements for professionals in our field. These guidelines include education involving both didactic and direct patient contact experiences. Using telehealth, trainees can complete supervised comprehensive patient assessments remotely without the need for the trainee, supervisor, or patient to be physically present in the same location.

Given the lack of a vaccine, the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic is unclear; however, the volume of patients in need of neuropsychological assessment is expected to remain high. Staggered patient visits and physical distancing must be maintained in the office as a means of mitigating the risk of viral transmission. Teleneuropsychology is an alternative assessment mode that allows for uninterrupted patient flow and minimizes health risks to patients, trainees and

professionals. In addition, both commercial and electronic health record-based HIPAA-compliant telehealth platforms are widely available to ensure patient privacy/confidentiality and maintenance of test security, effectively providing opportunities for remote but still “hands on” clinical training.

Lastly, teleneuropsychology allows for the provision of services to underrepresented and largely underserved minority populations who now more than ever may be less likely to have or seek access to services. Teleneuropsychology helps to address the significant health disparities associated with COVID19 in communities of color and among the elderly by providing access to assessment while maintaining best health practices.

Upon careful consideration of these factors and the relative benefits and risks, the New York Neuropsychology Group (NYNG) supports the use of teleneuropsychology for the service of our patients and for the clinical training of students at all levels of training, including externs, interns/residents, and fellows. Although teleneuropsychology cannot replace in-person work in some situations, there are clearly settings where it is not only appropriate, but desirable. Teleneuropsychology is approved by CMS, supported by both empirical and anecdotal data, and can provide excellent opportunities for training and clinical care.

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