

**Telephone Analysis<sup>1</sup>***Reported by:**Jill Savege Scharff* *Moderated by:**Charles Hanly* 

American, Argentinian, and British panelists presented the arguments for and against teleanalysis (a kind of remote analysis) and shared their experimental work in the practice and teaching of psychoanalysis using the telephone and Skype with video-camera. Audience members eagerly joined in a large group discussion to explore, challenge, argue against, and support the usefulness of teleanalysis in the practice and teaching of psychoanalysis. The panel held that psychoanalysis must adapt to the current social reality posed by the global economy and use its supporting information technology in order to consider the individual, exceptional needs of analysands in training who live in rural areas and in repressed cultures, as, for instance, Eastern Europe and China, executives who travel for work, and young adults who have grown up on technology. Technology enables psychoanalytic clinicians to relate to such analysands and to maintain the optimum frequency of analytic sessions for in-depth analytic work with analysands who are far from psychoanalytic centers. The panel objected to the claim that psychoanalysis is chasing after technology as an alternative to in-depth in-person work and that telephone analysis is not analysis. They asserted that psychoanalysts continue to value the study of the in-person analytic dyad but are adapting to cultural shifts by experimenting with the supplementary use of the telephone, videoconference, and Skype in their practice and teaching of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis has been responding to cultural developments since Freud, and then, as now, this responsiveness opens up new pathways of understanding.

The main questions explored were: Can psychoanalysts whose work depends on the harmonics of human interaction work in depth with a person in a circumstance in which they are alone in an office with a communication tool? Can they develop an image of the internal world of the analysand without nonverbal cues? Can there be effective affective attunement, an appreciation of resistance, work with transference and counter-transference? Can a training analysis on the telephone prepare a candidate so that the analysis of their own analysands is at a level of competence equivalent to that of a candidate in traditional analysis?

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<sup>1</sup> Panel held at the 46th Congress of the International Psychoanalytical Association, Chicago, Illinois, USA, 1 August 2009. Panelists: Geoffrey Anderson (Division 39), David Scharff and Jill Scharff (USA), Neville Symington (Australia); Asbed Aryan, Sara Berenstein, Ricardo Carlino, Pablo Grinfeld (Argentina) and Jaime Marcos Lutenberg (Argentina).

The Spanish-speaking group from Buenos Aires spoke first in turn. They said that telephone analysis is similar to traditional analysis in using the analyst's suspended attention to free association, working with the unconscious and its derivatives and repressed childhood sexuality, and in analyzing dreams and transference. There is a difference in the space and time of the setting but they are similar in that both require a circumscribed setting. Telephone analysis is different from traditional or shuttle analysis in that there is no bodily presence and the contact is exclusively auditory: Without the libidinal presence of the body, the telephone privileges semiology of voice and permits analysis in one's native language. In the 21st century there has been a social and personal transformation of the mind, transcending specific cultures, and therefore calling for a change in international psychoanalytic culture appropriate to this new reality. The resulting new subjectivity and mentality require fluidity in contemporary thinking. Referring to Kant, the Argentine group said that a sophisticated psychoanalytic understanding of the changing dimensions of time and space must be developed in theory and practice to comprehend the reality of the 21st century. In essence, telephone analysis is a response to this challenge. They asked psychoanalysts to stay attuned to sociocultural changes, to do research into indications and contraindications, and to be open to transformation, as occurs with every living language and culture. They called on the IPA to use technology to broaden the reach of psychoanalysis.

The English-speaking group from the United States and Australia showed that telephone analysis developed as an alternative to emigration, shuttle analysis, or losing the analysand, and they examined resistances to its use. The group members then compared telephone analysis (with no visual clues) with Skype analysis (in which the analysand is seen lying on the couch in a remote location) in both of which the frame, though flexible, is firmly maintained. Illustrating work on the telephone without visual clues, they gave vignettes of good affective attunement, of technology-based interruption that felt like an empathic failure, and of the analyst's reception of an image which curiously did not fit the verbal description being given, a discrepancy that led to the recovery of dissociated material. Referring to mirror neuron research they explained that other channels become more sensitive in the absence of vision, and that the voice creates an image of the body in the analyst's mind. In this way, experience is conveyed for analysis in the here-and-now. Transference and countertransference occur as in a traditional setting, and sometimes more vividly. For instance, in one member's experience, the dislocation of the telephone sessions revealed a delusion in the transference which had not been evident in in-person sessions, and telephone sessions provided the route for its understanding and resolution. Referring to Skype analysis using the web camera, they described an analysand's choice of setting that readily displayed aspects of early experience. They closed with a reminder that psychoanalysis is primarily the encounter with an understanding mind in whatever setting that may occur, and they expressed appreciation for the newly minted IPA policy on remote analysis.

There were many insightful comments in the large group, of which a few stand out. Audience members trying to comprehend telephone analysis

tended to refer to their experience of shuttle analysis, an adaptation for training candidates in remote locations with which the Paris society has had experience over 10 years. Dr Alan Gibeault said that he had been pleasantly surprised to find that an analytic process could indeed develop sufficiently to ensure that the analysand could become a good analyst, and his colleague who trains candidates in Lebanon added that it is time to think of a combination of in-person and telephone sessions to lessen disruption in the lives of their candidates who otherwise have to travel one week a month to a foreign city. Two ILAP candidates spoke: Dr Yolanda Varela mentioned that the direct delivery of the voice into the mind of analysand and analyst via their headsets made it easy to internalize the internal image of the other, and Dr. Betty Benaim reported that she would have preferred in-person analysis but had found value both in shuttle analysis and in telephone analysis, and thanked the IPA that, by training her and her colleagues, psychoanalysis in person could come to the next generation in Panama. Concern expressed by many analysts of silent patients who might feel abandonment in telephone sessions led to a discussion of indications, contraindications, and the need to analyze the countertransference as one would in traditional analysis. Dr. Albert Mason had a countertransference response of needing to see the analysand but he acknowledged that speech inflection conveys unconscious communication, in which case telephone analysis is a viable, immediate, and humane service. Dr. Ana-Maria Rizzuto mentioned the ubiquitous use of the cellphone to avoid loneliness and intense emotion, which caused her to wonder whether telephone sessions could allow analysis in depth. Others joined in to question the analyst's financial motivation, the analysand's right to choose the format of sessions, and the analyst's ability to see the resistance that might underpin the choice.

The use of the telephone and Skype in psychoanalysis is an important issue in the development of psychoanalysis in areas where those seeking psychoanalysis for treatment or for training live in areas far from psychoanalytic training centers. The use of telephone and Skype for the practice of psychoanalysis has been acknowledged and was debated in the pages of the International Psychoanalytic Association newsletter in the summer of 2005. But its use is much wider than generally admitted because of analysts' guilt about acting without full authority, fear of sanction, and concern about income. This panel on telephone analysis in psychoanalytic training proved to be timely. On Friday 31 July, 2009 the International Psychoanalytic Association issued a new policy to the effect that remote analysis by telephone or Skype may be approved as supplementary analysis by the Education Committee and International New Groups Committee in exceptional circumstances for the purpose of training candidates. The experimental nature of the undertaking must be acknowledged by analyst and candidate who must be convinced of its value and should review its efficacy from time to time with consultants who will explore whether candidates analysed in this way can meet the standards of functional equivalence. In his concluding remarks from the Chair, Dr. Charles Hanly clarified that this approval for remote analysis may be given only where there is no alternative, significant time of in-person analysis has occurred to establish an analytic process and

both analyst and analysand are confident that the analytic process can be continued by telephone. This decision of the IPA was welcomed as a spur to the outreach of psychoanalytic thinking. Now that teleanalysis may be undertaken in approved circumstances, the next step is to engage in a clinical research project to evaluate its indications and effectiveness.

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