

ALBERTA PSYCHOLOGY
DURING A PANDEMIC:



PAA Member Survey

Fifth Edition

August 2020

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	8	TELEPSYCHOLOGY
4	BACKGROUND	9	PRACTICE CLARITY
5	PROFESSIONAL IMPACTS	10	COMMUNICATIONS
6	PERSONAL IMPACTS	11	PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT
7	PERCEIVED IMPACTS	12	CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Psychological practice in Alberta has been impacted by the pandemic in a variety of ways. For this fifth survey, respondents reported statistically significant increases in workloads (close to pre-pandemic levels) and social commitments compared to the initial survey. The majority (who had already transitioned to telepsychology) reported increasing confidence in their working conditions and personal privacy. There was also a statistically significant increase in the number of respondents who can now continue their practice for 12 months or longer (60%).

Psychologist respondents continue to be personally impacted by the pandemic but still perceived those negative impacts to be even greater for those served by respondents. Self-care, psychological health, and overall functioning were all reported as deficient in comparison to pre-pandemic levels at higher rates for their students, patients, and clients than for respondents themselves.

Results indicated that telepsychology did not appear to improve efficacy or connectedness of services provided but that most respondents made do under the circumstances. There was a statistically significant increase in perceptions of “connectedness” and “wellness” in using telepsychology and in the intention to continue using telepsychology (81%) post-pandemic from the initial survey.

Most respondents felt that they had good access to needed pandemic-specific resources, but some still reported the influx of information to be overwhelming. The most accessed resources reported came from PAA (decreasing) and BMS with statistically significant increases in access to the BMS resources. Advocacy continued to be considered most useful with statistically significant increases in awareness of advocacy efforts from the initial survey. Resources such as infographics, social media, and ENews continued to have high, and increasing, usage rates.

15% respondents reached out to PAA directly and those who did found the PAA staff team to be highly responsive and to have provided exceptional services under the circumstances (all satisfactory or better, a statistically significant improvement).

Overall, the first 20 weeks of the pandemic appear to have impacted psychologists and those served in significantly negative ways. Respondents quickly migrated to home offices and telepsychology with some concerns that appear to be decreasing. Targeted resources and PAA staff support continue to be appreciated and rated highly.

BACKGROUND

The fifth online longitudinal survey, was sent to members of the Psychologists' Association of Alberta in August 2020 sought to help understand the experience of being a psychologist in Alberta 20 weeks after WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

There are currently no known models on how to operate as a psychologist or as a professional association during a pandemic, and this survey aimed to help PAA understand, and respond to, the impacts of this pandemic on psychological practice in Alberta.

This survey asked about the impact of the pandemic on members professionally, personally, and on those to whom they provide psychological services. It also asked about members' use of telepsychology, their practice clarity, and the effectiveness of PAA's communications and professional support for them.

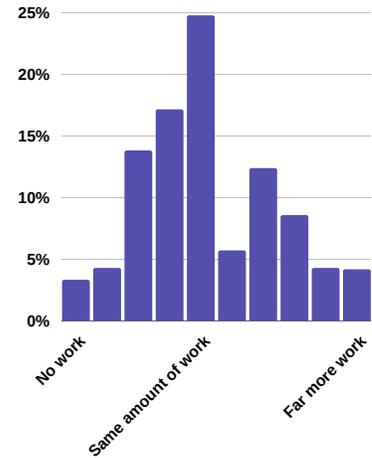
There are 3-4 questions in each of 7 areas with an opportunity for member's comments and qualitative feedback at the end of the survey. The overall response rate was 219 participants.

A note on statistically testing: due to the tailing effect from considerably less respondents with each survey, statistically significant results are very rare. General trends in percentages are still available.



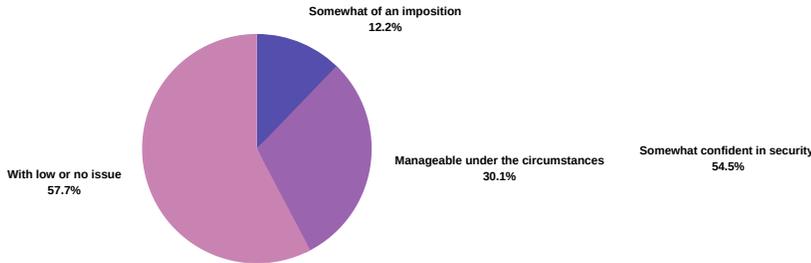
Area 1: Professional Impacts

How has the pandemic impacted your workload as a psychologist?

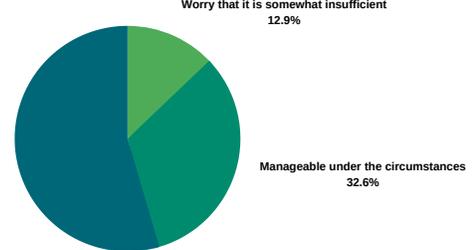


Of the 63.81% of respondents that are currently in a home office, how easy has it been to address:

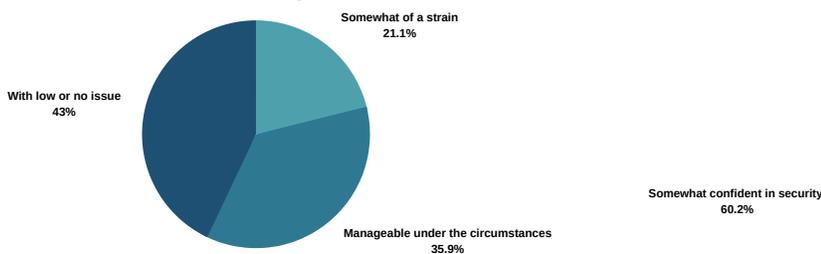
Personal Privacy:



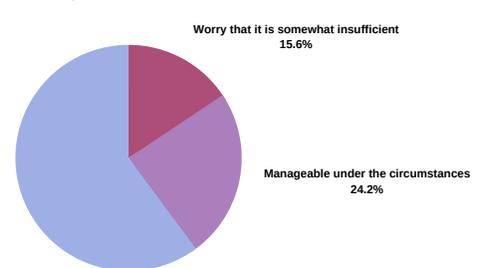
Client Privacy:



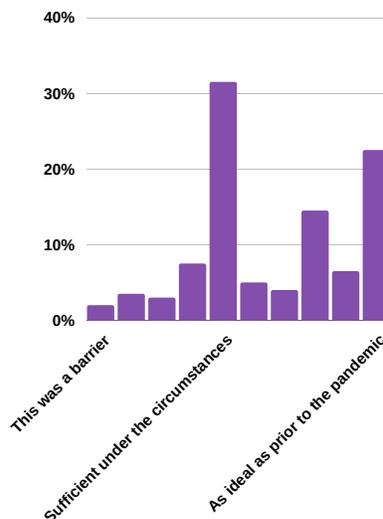
Current Working Conditions:



Security of Information:



Have you felt you had sufficient access to the professional resources that you required (files, testing materials, books, etc.)?



Workload generally increased from inaugural, returning to usual amount. Security and client privacy are stagnant, while confidence with working conditions and personal privacy are generally increasing. Most continue to be satisfied with resource levels.

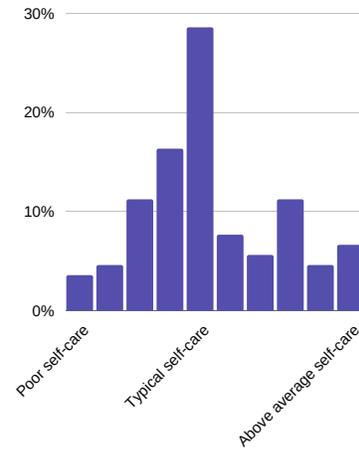
Area 2: Personal Impacts

In considering yourself as a person, and your family, how do you perceive this pandemic to have impacted you:

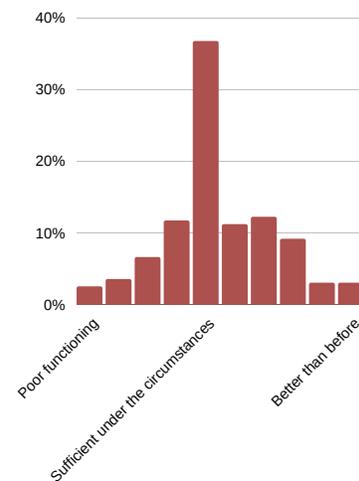
Personal self-care, functioning, and psychological health are akin with inaugural reports.

Those who can sustain business practices for 12+ months have almost doubled in percentage from Edition 2 (May), congruent with an increase in workload.

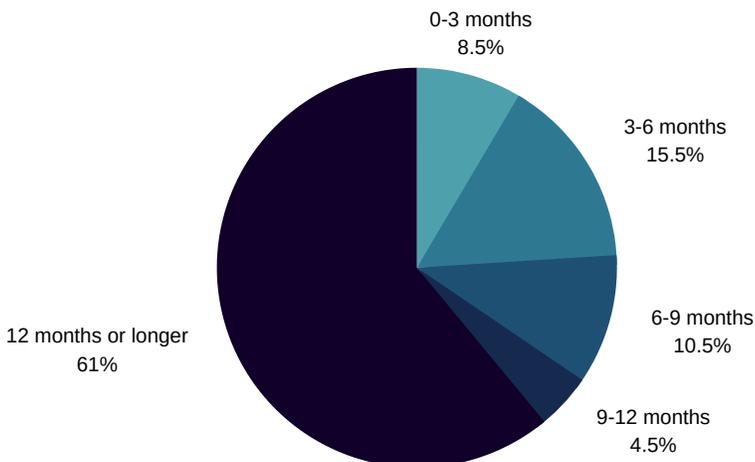
1. Self-care:



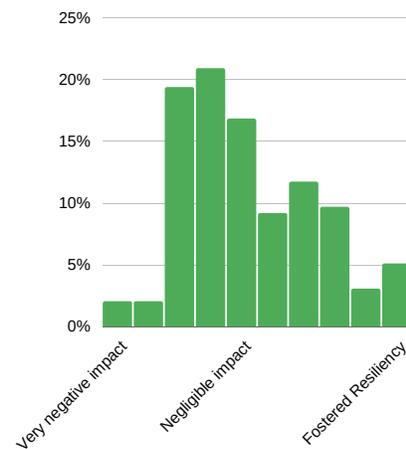
2. Functioning (employment, relationships):



How long can you sustain business practices to provide adequate client care given the current financial impacts of the pandemic?

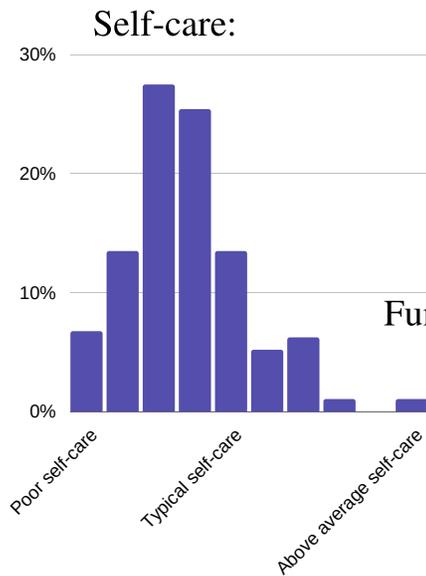


3. Psychological health:

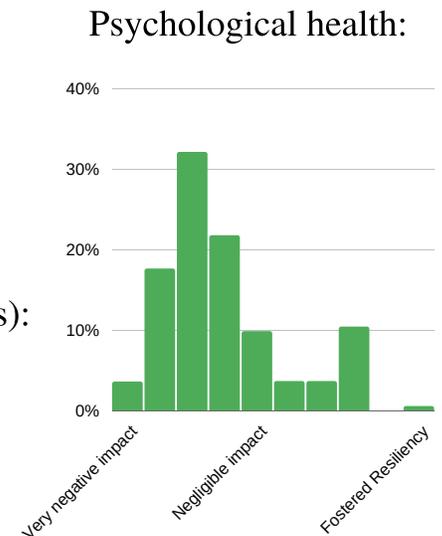
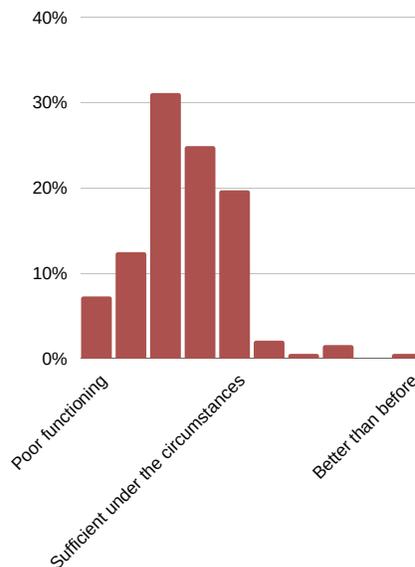


Area 3: Perceived Impacts

In considering those you serve (clients, students, research participants, etc.), how do you perceive this pandemic to have impacted their:



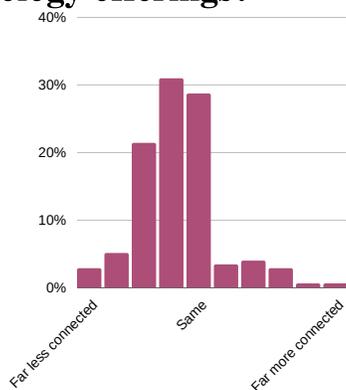
Functioning (employment, relationships):



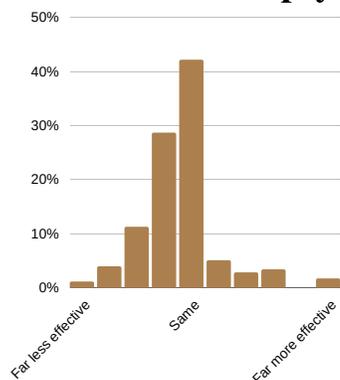
Perceived impacts on served communities remains stagnant from inaugural. Though there are minor changes, generally it is the same. Some respondents report that it is difficult to rate all of their clients, students, or research participants on a single scale.

Area 4: Telepsychology

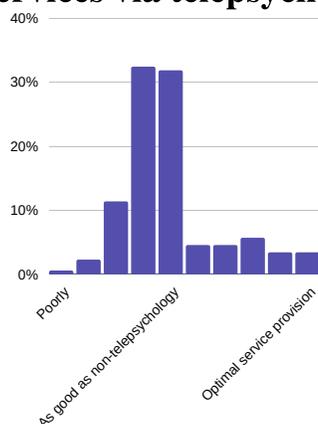
How connected did you feel to clients/students/other service recipients during telepsychology compared to non telepsychology offerings?



How effective did you perceive your telepsychology services to be in relation to previous similar non-telepsychology services?

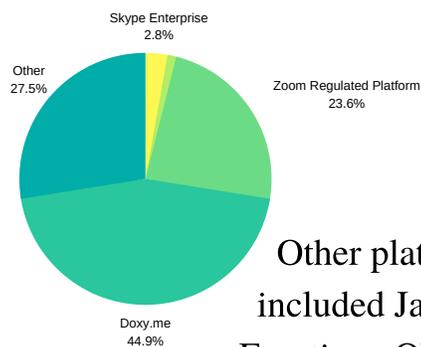


How well do you feel that you were able to provide services via telepsychology?



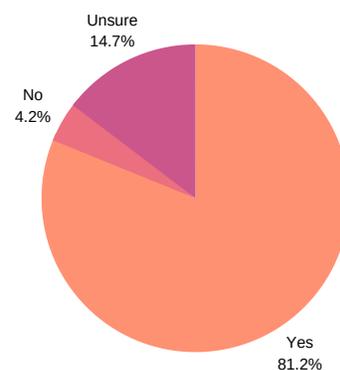
93.23% of respondents are now using telepsychology services, very similar to survey 1. Connectedness and wellness have improved, while effectiveness remains the same. More respondents than ever will be using telepsychology post-pandemic.

Which platform do you use?



Other platforms included Jane.app, Facetime, OWL, and telephone calls

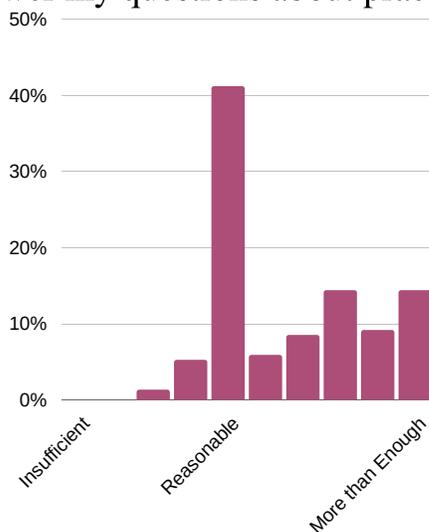
Are you likely to integrate some (or all) telepsychology into your practice post-pandemic?



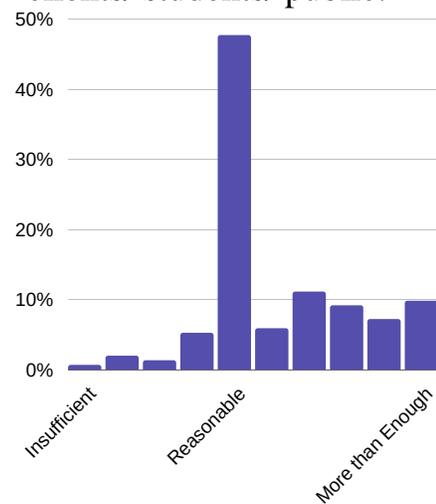
Area 5: Practice Clarity

80.6% of respondents accessed the PAA's online COVID-19 resource page. They found that:

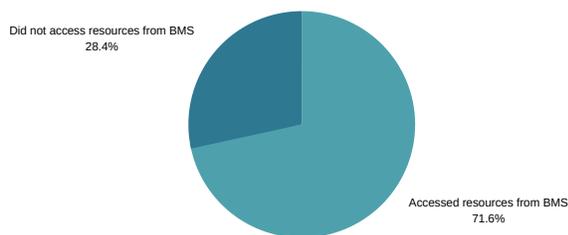
There were sufficient resources to answer my questions about practice.



There were useful resources for my clients/ students/ public.



71.58% of respondents accessed the BMS CPA/ CPAP Liability Insurance Policy's COVID-19 communications.



37.5% were able to secure more useful resources elsewhere, from sources including the APA, CAP, CPA, and NAADAC.

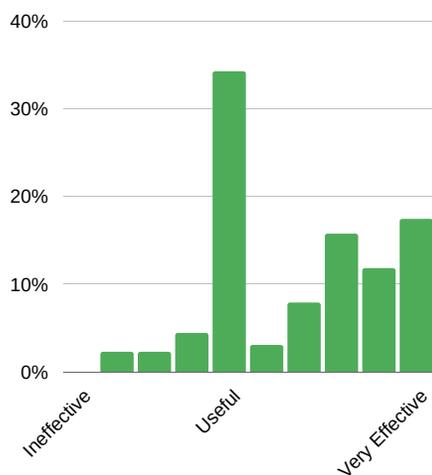
Fewer respondents accessed both PAA's online resources. A similar level accessed BMS's resources, as well as a similar level found more useful resources elsewhere. Satisfaction with resource levels for both practice and clients/ students/ the public remained stagnant.

Area 6: Communications

Respondents were asked whether they accessed various forms of resources, and how effective they found them to be. Regarding advocacy, members were asked for awareness rate and how necessary they found them to be.

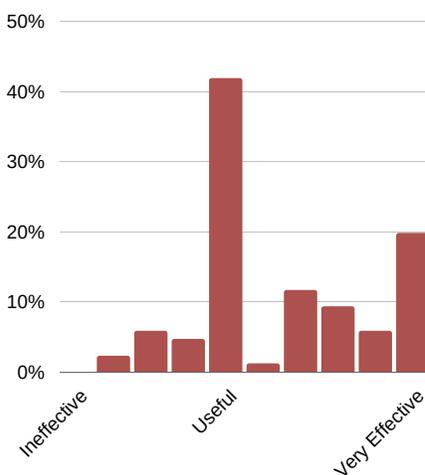
1. Regular ENews

93.68% Accessibility rate



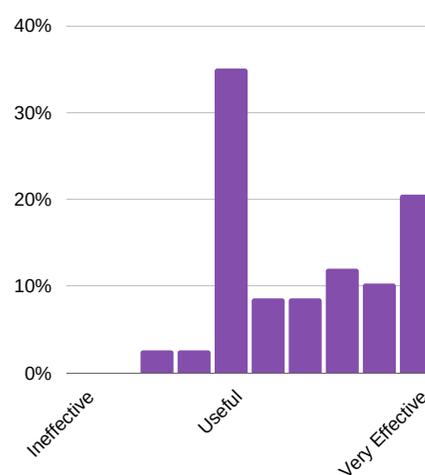
2. Social Media:

45.26% Accessibility Rate



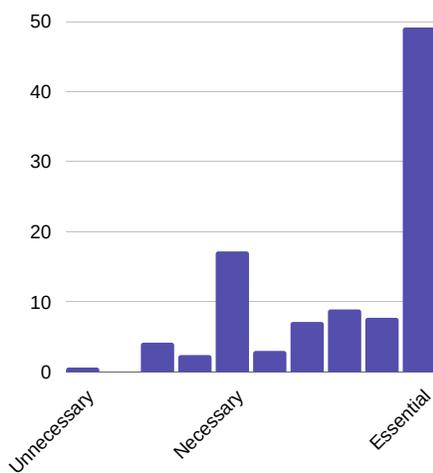
3. Infographics, posters, and videos:

61.58% Accessibility Rate



4. Advocacy:

88.95% Awareness Rate



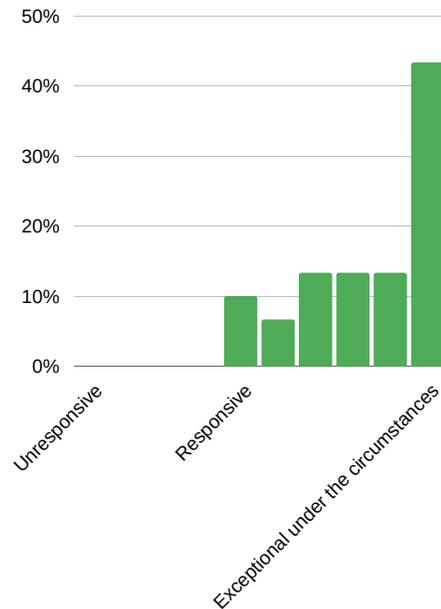
This is the first survey where there is comparable data with the inaugural edition. ENews, social media, and infographics/ posters/ videos remained stagnant in accessibility rate, while advocacy's awareness rate significantly increased. Ratings for all four remained constant from survey 1.

Area 7: Professional Support

15.26% of respondents reached out to PAA directly, via phone or email, to access staff support.

We at PAA encourage our members to reach out, via email or phone, if they have questions or concerns. We are unfortunately not able to address these if they are sent in via the qualitative section of the pandemic survey.

They found the PAA staff team to be:



Some thoughts from our members:

I think maintaining virtual services is essential as we will be under the pandemic for some time still. I find virtual services positive in every aspect for myself and clients.

I simply wasn't as motivated as I was pre-COVID to use resources - it's not because they weren't useful.

I would VERY MUCH like to support a lobby to have psychological services be included with health care. With the impact of the pandemic on mental health, this seems like such a necessary move.

The integration of technologies in mental health is unstoppable and unavoidable. I would love to see us psychologists to take advantage of the available technologies and to adapt more quickly to the changing world.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Associations benefit members by being a source of learning, connection, and support. These needs are highlighted during times of crisis such as this pandemic. This fifth monthly survey remains an informative glimpse into the experiences and needs of psychologists in relation to this pandemic. Of note, we are beginning to see clear trends and statistically significant differences (increasing workloads, confidence in work conditions and telepsychology, ability to sustain business, access of resources, awareness of advocacy work, appreciation of association direct support, and likelihood of post-pandemic telepsychology use) from the initial survey done 4 weeks into the pandemic.

Recommendations

Advocacy

Continue active advocacy efforts. Members value the role of advocacy and being members of an association creates a collective that can both represent the voices of members and those we serve but can also tap into the wealth of experience and expertise of members to inform advocacy that matters.

Connection

Facilitate member networking and connectivity. This pandemic has negatively impacted members. Given the benefits of associating with a group with similar experiences, it is key for members to be able to share experiences, connect, and be validated that there are common experiences – and that no one psychologist is in this alone. There is power in association membership and the associated sense of belonging.

Member Support

Continue to develop, and prioritize, member supports. In a crisis the association has a role in supporting members as they retool their professional practices to thrive. This means information, resources, and support to adjust to new practices. Key is providing reliable, relevant, and accessible information, training, and services. Highlighted in this was tools to optimize telepsychology practices and guidelines for return to in-person practices during a pandemic. Members are best served in this regard by a wide range of communication tools (including website, email, social media, infographics, online meetings, webinars). Psychologists are respected and essential health professionals. They deserve, and appreciate, a professional association that is highly responsive and member-service oriented.

Research

Continue this research and employ knowledge transfer with the results. Not enough is known about telepsychology in Alberta. Members benefit from evidence-based practices and outcome informed telepsychology service information. Even in non-pandemic times, telepsychology will continue to allow psychologists to serve those who might otherwise have limited access. And our professional is well placed to lead in this regard.