



THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER  
FOR HEALTH CONCERNS

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## **Cyber Counseling**

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### **Why this Course is Needed**

The Internet has changed how we communicate, how people are educated and trained and now how we provide health care services. Through the use of the Internet not only are traditional service delivery systems changing but also the skills needed by treatment staff providing Internet services are changing. Credentialing and accreditation systems, HIPPA requirements, case management and clinical supervision systems, liability and malpractice, and duty-to-warn issues are all affected by the addition of cyber counseling. In 2001 CARF and JCAHO accredited their first online substance abuse treatment program, eGetoging.com. Through the advantages the Internet offers the future of substance abuse treatment is found in a new vision of services blending best-practice clinical treatment and innovative technologies into a system that provides high-quality, cost effective, anonymous, time-saving, consistent and evidence based care. It is part of the current continuum of care and a necessary and valuable new level of service.

If you visit a substance abuse treatment center in the future you will see a computer and workstation for each patient, computer-based CD-ROM programs and Internet access for immediate contact with Web-based knowledge programs. Patients and staff will access detailed assessment systems and staff work with patient outcome data collection mechanisms. Staff will utilize input based on information about the patients' demographics, needs and structures within a given treatment environment.

At future substance abuse centers patients may seek support online by accessing a bulletin board that displays shared feelings or informational messages about a particular topic. They might post a personal message of their own anticipating responses from those who have similar experiences or concerns. E-mails can be exchanged between therapists and clients. These processes are examples of *asynchronous communication*. Support may come through text and voice chat rooms where people respond immediately. This is *synchronous communication*. Audio-visual conferencing makes voice interaction and a video-streamed live picture of the counselor available throughout the group session, a valuable addition of here and now "presence." This level of interaction closely emulates the communication and sense of "community" that participants enjoy in a traditional group session, making online group treatment even more intimate and effective.

A number of tools will be available to clinicians in helping them tailor treatment to the particular patient. Community services, treatment resources, continuing care systems, and patient tracking systems will be instantly available to the clinician. Staff will be able to maximize the advantages of the cyber environment and access evidence-based treatment methods to meet the individual needs of each patient. Current treatment concepts will be better utilized as technology enhances the clinician's access to information. In fact, patients may never step foot in a traditional center but access care via the Internet.



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As the addiction field is moving into the technology revolution the learning curve is steep. The process of "getting it" will accelerate if the field is to gain a momentum of its own and overcome its cautiousness about technology. There will be a day when clinicians will find it hard to believe that we ever did treatment as we have in the past.

But to get there field needs to be better informed of the advantages and disadvantages of cyber counseling and the skills needed in the future to counsel in cyberspace. The learning curve for counselors is steep but one that must be faced quickly as cyber counseling is a reality we all must face.

### **Course Objectives**

At the completion of this course participants will be able to:

- Describe at least three applications of cyber counseling currently available including Web TV, Videoconferencing, online group therapy;
- Identify the advantages and disadvantages of cyber counseling;
- Describe at least three areas of knowledge and skills that will be required of counselors providing cyber counseling;
- Describe the legal and ethical concerns brought about through cyber counseling;
- Demonstrate basic skills in computer usage and accessing a cyber counseling program, such as [egetgoing.com](http://egetgoing.com);
- Discuss the procedures to be employed in online clinical supervision systems, including those currently available, and those offered in future technologies.

### **About the Trainer**

In addition to Dr. David Powell's thirty-eight years of clinical experience and his academic degrees in counseling and psychology, he is a clinical advisor to [egetgoing.com](http://egetgoing.com), the first fully accredited (by JCAHO and CARF) cyber counseling program in substance abuse. He has authored several articles on cyber counseling in the substance abuse field as well as lectured worldwide on the subject of cyber counseling.