

Conclusion

Since 2018, the research department at the Regional Forensic Psychiatric Clinic in Växjö, Sweden, has been working to identify, develop, apply, adapt and evaluate VR-assisted interventions in forensic psychiatric care. The clinic has a unique focus where VR interventions are tested in research and development projects in order to provide knowledge about how VR can improve the forensic psychiatric care. A major challenge in this is the implementation of new technology.

Background

The evidence base for forensic psychiatric care is severely lacking, and there are no available treatment methods with an established, moderate-high, effect for forensic psychiatry in general. Lately, new treatment interventions applying Virtual Reality (VR) technology have been developed for various mental disorders. Using VR as a tool in the treatment could provide possibilities for forensic psychiatry to assist patients with skills training in contexts that are relevant to the “regular” life, and not just life as an inpatient in forensic psychiatry. There is a need to increase the care content in the everyday life for forensic psychiatric patients. VR could provide an “extended arm” for various professions, e.g. by allowing ward staff to support patients in various VR-led activities. Examples of activities can be soothing meditations (e.g., a forest walk), physical activity or practicing regular errands (e.g., going to the bank).



Methods

The research department is also, together with a multidisciplinary team, currently developing appropriate content to use VR to support the treatment of forensic psychiatric patients (e.g., apps, VR-experiences, 180/360-degree movies). The clinic has a VR room where staff can use varying VR softwares for e.g. social skills training, applying different applications from the more complex Social Worlds by CleVR, to VRelax, to more simple VR apps available for Oculus Quest 2.



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