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New technologies: virtual reality interventions and simulation experiences for psychotic disorders

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Learning Goal:

The aim of this symposium is to gain insights in the use of new technologies for interventions and the simulation of psychosis. Virtual reality and simulating technologies can form powerful tools for educational purposes and offers a unique possibility to incorporate social interactions and environments in therapy.

Abstract Text:

New technologies have been introduced as a tool for mental health for treatment and educational purposes. Virtual reality (VR) and simulating technologies enable us to design realistic situations or scenarios that can elicit psychological and physiological responses similar to those in the real world. VR can be used for people with a psychotic disorder to provide a safe training environment, that is interactive, controllable and can be personalized. Moreover, new technologies can be used for clinicians and the general public to gain a better understanding of what it feels like to have psychotic symptoms. Findings from pioneering research will be presented. Results of a pilot on VR social cognition training for patients with a psychotic disorder will be shown. Immersive virtual narratives and interactive scenarios were used in this therapy to improve social functioning. Next, results from a RCT of VR based cognitive behavioral therapy (VR-CBT) will be presented. Outcomes were measured with the experience sampling method, a diary application. Exercises in virtual environments were found to be effective in reducing paranoia and negative mood in everyday life. The third presentation shows results of a novel voice hearing simulation which was designed to increase public awareness of voice hearing, and can be used as a clinicians training tool. Findings on the potential of the simulation for clinicians and the general public with regard to stigma and understanding will be presented. Finally, a closer look will be taken at psychosis simulations. A tool of analysis and reference guide for communicating, representing, simulating or imagining what it is like to experience psychotic phenomena will be presented. This symposium shows how new technologies can be used for interventions and educational purposes. VR therapies and simulations have a great potential for increasing the understanding of psychosis and expanding the therapeutic toolbox.

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OF HUMAN RECONNECTION**