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Applications of Virtual Reality Technology in Rehabilitation

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The physician today has the privilege of having access to a variety of technologies that provide tools for both research and clinical intervention. Virtual Reality (VR) is an emerging technology with a wide variety of potential benefits for many aspects of rehabilitation assessment, treatment and research. Through its ability to enable the creation and control of three-dimensional, ecological dynamic stimulus environments in which behavioral responses can be recorded and measured, VR offers clinical evaluation and rehabilitation options not available through traditional methods. Initial VR applications in other areas of medicine have yielded encouraging results, but further research and understanding of this evolving technology will be crucial to its effective integration into rehabilitation. This article provides a brief overview of VR technology, analyzes the specific benefits VR offers to consumers and rehabilitation service providers, and discusses the potential application areas and important considerations in applying this technology. The ability to provide rehabilitation services for locations outside the clinic is an important option for clinicians and patients. Effective therapy can best be provided by the use of high-tech systems coupled to robots and connected between locations via high-speed networks, reduced latency, and high-bandwidth. Using data extraction software would help analyze the data received to provide both the patient and the therapist with an assessment of current treatment and changes needed for future therapies.

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