Use of Virtual Reality to Manage Anxiety in Patients on Neuro-Rehabilitation Unit

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Abstract : Introduction: Management of anxiety in rehabilitation setting often is a challenge and is usually done by using medication. The role of psychology and the creation of a quite environment in order to reduce stimulation helps in the process. We have a hypothesis that feedback from a calm visual imagery with soothing music help in reducing anxiety in these setting Aim-To explore the possibility of using virtual reality in the management of anxiety in a setting of neuro-rehabilitation unit. Method: Six patients in an inpatient rehabilitation unit with acquired brain injury subjected to a low stimulation calming visual motion picture with calm music. Six sessions were conducted over 6 weeks. All sessions were performed in a separate purpose built room in the unit. . A cohort of 6 people with various neurological conditions were involved in 6 sessions of 30 minutes during their inpatient rehabilitation. They reported benefit from using the virtual reality environment in reducing their anxiety. Results: All reported improvement in their anxiety levels. They felt there was a calming effect of the session. There was a sense of feeling of self empowerment on direct questioning. Conclusion: Virtual reality environment can aid the traditional rehabilitation techniques used to manage the levels of anxiety experienced by people with acquired brain injury undergoing inpatient rehabilitation.

Keywords : neurological rehabilitation, virtual reality, anxiety, calming environment

Conference Title : ICCMNR 2023 : International Conference on Case Management in Neurorehabilitation

Conference Location : Amsterdam, Netherlands

Conference Dates : August 03-04, 2023