Keynote Speaker

Is Clinical Virtual Reality Ready for Primetime?

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Abstract

Since the mid-1990s, a significant scientific literature has evolved regarding the outcomes from the use of what we now refer to as Clinical Virtual Reality (VR). This use of VR simulation technology has produced encouraging results when applied to address cognitive, psychological, motor, and functional impairments across a wide range of clinical health conditions. This talk addresses the question, “Is Clinical VR Ready for Primetime?”. After a brief description of the various forms of VR technology, I will discuss the trajectory of Clinical VR over the last 20 years and summarize the basic assets that VR offers for creating clinical applications. The discussion then addresses the question of readiness in terms of the theoretical basis for Clinical VR assets, the research to date, the pragmatic factors regarding availability, usability, and costs of Clinical VR content/systems, and the ethical issues for the safe use of VR with clinical populations. My key take home message is that when reviewing the theoretical underpinnings and research findings to date, it is clear that Clinical VR will have a significant impact on future research and practice. Pragmatic issues that can influence adoption across many areas of psychology also appear favorable, but professional guidelines will be needed to promote its safe and ethical use. While there is still much research needed to advance the science in this area, it is predicted that Clinical VR applications will become indispensable tools in the toolbox of psychological researchers and practitioners and will only grow in relevance and popularity in the future.

Bio

Skip Rizzo is a clinical psychologist and Director of Medical VR at the University of Southern California Institute for Creative Technologies. He is also a Research Professor with the USC Dept. of Psychiatry and School of Gerontology. Over the last 20 years, Skip has conducted research on the design, development and evaluation of Virtual Reality systems targeting the areas of clinical assessment, treatment, and rehabilitation across the domains of psychological, cognitive and motor functioning in both healthy and clinical populations. This work has focused on PTSD, TBI, Autism, ADHD, Alzheimer’s disease, stroke and other clinical conditions. In spite of the diversity of these clinical R&D areas, the common thread that drives all of his work with digital technologies involves the study of how Virtual Reality simulations can be usefully applied to human healthcare beyond what’s possible with traditional 20th Century methods. To view some videos on his work, go to: http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=UUQrbzaW3x9wWoZPl4-l4GSA&feature=plcp